Ready and Desirous

By Bishop Lay

TL53
L426

9741

Library of the
Church Divinity School
of the Pacific

No.
Ex Dor
Date

fins
265.2

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
LIBRARY
1962

READY AND DESIROUS:

OR,

THE RIGHT PREPARATION OF CANDIDATES FOR THE LAYING ON OF HANDS.

BY

THE RT. REV. HENRY C. LAY, D.D., LL.D.,

BISHOP OF EASTON.

CHURCH DIVINITY SCHOOL of the PACIFIC LIBRARY

SECOND EDITION.

NEW YORK:

JAMES POTT & CO., PUBLISHERS,

ASTOR PLACE.

1885.

BX
5949
C7
L39
1885

Copyright, 1885,
By JAMES POTT & CO.

TL53
L426

Press of J. J. Little & Co.,
Nos. 10 to 20 Astor Place, New York.

PREFACE.

At the instance of valued friends and correspondents, certain articles, originally contributed to the *Churchman*, are in this volume, collected and revised. Some things have been omitted and some things added. The last chapter is new.

In the preparation of this volume, I have had in my thought chiefly my younger brethren of the clergy, and next to these, parents, sponsors and teachers, many of them thrown largely on their own resources in preparing children for the Laying on of Hands.

I have sought to recall the embarrassments of my early ministry, the methods which experience has proved to be useful, the hints which have been dropped in my hearing by prudent Bishops and pastors; and out of this material

to furnish suggestions, many of them, no doubt obvious enough, but which do not occur to everybody.

Of what I have written, careful and affectionate dealing with the individual is the keynote.

Each several soul must give account of itself to God ; and they, whom the Holy Ghost has made overseers, must account, not only for the flock, but for each several member of it.

The benefit of Confirmation is greatly diminished, unless we seize the opportunity it affords, and which in after-life so seldom recurs, to address ourselves to the personal conscience, and to enlighten the individual intelligence.

DIOCESE OF EASTON, EPIPHANY, 1885.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Notice Given of Confirmation	7
II.	Confirmation an Opportunity	15
III.	The Confirmation Class	23
IV.	Parents and Sponsors at Confirmation Time	31
V.	Text-Books for Confirmation	39
VI.	Confirmation a Convenient Season	47
VII.	Prerequisites for Confirmation	58
VIII.	Prerequisites for Confirmation (Con.)	65
IX.	The Covenant Ratified	77
X.	Renunciation	87
XI.	Worldly Conformity	98
XII.	The Profession of Faith	111
XIII.	Obedience	124
XIV.	The Blessing of God Almighty	132
XV.	The Gift of the Holy Ghost	142
XVI.	The Gift of the Holy Ghost for Strength and Illumination	152

CHAPTER PAGE

XVII. The Gift of the Holy Ghost for Defence..... 165

XVIII. Admission to the Holy Communion.. 172

XIX. The Confirmed Who do not Communicate..... 186

XX. The Confirmation Office Enriched. 195

READY AND DESIROUS;

OR,

THE RIGHT PREPARATION OF CANDIDATES FOR THE LAYING ON OF HANDS.

CHAPTER I.

NOTICE GIVEN OF CONFIRMATION.

THE rubric provides that "*there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion until such time as he be confirmed or be* READY *and* DESIROUS *to be confirmed.*"

This is a wise and necessary provision. That is a solemn day in the life of child or man when he participates, for the first time, in the most mysterious and awful rite of our holy religion. Men should not press to it hastily and without challenge. For her own sake and for her children's sake, the Church forbids them to become Communicants until they have been Confirmed,

or to become Confirmed until they have been catechised.

Thus the theory is that every baptized person comes under the personal guidance of his pastor, is taught by him, advised by him, and presented by him for the laying on of hands. If the Confirmation be for good reason delayed, one may be admitted to the communion; but he must be READY and DESIROUS to be Confirmed.

It is proposed, in these pages, to suggest some thoughts about preparing children for Confirmation.

The writer cannot hope to say anything worthy to be considered by his brethren who are experienced in the duties of the sacred office; from them he would prefer to learn. But the recollection of his own inexperience assures him that there are young clergymen who are honestly at a loss as to the right word to be spoken, and the right thing to be done, when an Episcopal visit is in anticipation.

Moreover, experience and observation satisfy us that Christian people often shrink with a nervous dread from any active share in bring-

ing their children and their god-children to Confirmation. They fear to incur the responsibility of advising them to so important a step; they think that the instruction to be given is beyond their power to impart. Where adequate pains is not taken in this matter, the explanation is to be found in diffidence as well as negligence.

The truth is, that in all our dealings with the spiritual concerns of others we are tempted to imagine that we must depart from our naturalness, that we must be over-strained and exaggerated in the teaching we give; whereas, in truth, to be useful in guiding others we need only follow out, step by step, what the Church bids us do and say, and tell in the most unartificial phrase, what we know by experience of the Lord's merciful dealings with penitent sinners.

One of our wisest Bishops was wont to admonish his young clergy: "There is no greater mistake than to preach beyond your own experience; to describe repentance and faith and joy in God otherwise than as you know them in your own spiritual conflict."

The world recognizes the wonderful efficacy of the mother's teaching to her little ones. Doubtless the secret is in this: she does not assume a tone, or mount on spiritual stilts; her lessons about human depravity, for instance, are, in effect, a simple rehearsal of her own conflicts with pride, temper, indolence, or the like temptation.

The title we have chosen for this volume seems to comprehend all that is requisite for Confirmation. Pause a moment and weigh the words.

Our dear mother Church has a way of dropping a little word here and there very full of meaning. Good children will heed a nod or a whisper of the kind parent; and so, good Churchmen are quick to catch up the hints and phrases which intimate the mind and will of the dear mother.

As a rule, one must be Confirmed in order to be admitted to the Lord's Supper. But if not Confirmed, he must be "READY AND DESIROUS" to be Confirmed. There is here a quiet assumption that there is something before Confirmation; that among her children

those only are fit for the Holy Communion who have made themselves ready for Confirmation, and desired the privilege, howbeit some have lacked opportunity.

There is a quiet assumption that in all cases Confirmation is not a rite to be received passively, but requires, in order to be received aright, thought and teaching and devout affection.

"READY AND DESIROUS!" Readiness is not Desire; for after we have made our children *ready*, it is still unsettled whether they *desire*, with a true yearning of soul, to pay their vows.

And Desire is not Readiness; for many a child, under the influence of momentary good feelings, or carried forward by the onward movement of friends and playmates, may *desire* and plead earnestly for permission to be Confirmed; whereas, he has no just conception of the ordinance, and so is not *ready*.

Yes, Confirmation brings its utmost blessing only when Readiness and Desire go hand in hand. One is saddened at the glib recitation of the Catechism, while over the young face there flits no spiritual expression. But is it not

also sad to see young people hastily collected, stimulated into an enthusiasm of desire, while no pains has been taken to make them read the bond and understand the far-reaching consequences of the brief transaction?

Under the revival system, this latter error predominates. Desire is everything; Readiness is nothing. When one, after the excitement is over, converses with individuals who have sought the best Confirmation they knew of—for "coming up to be prayed for" in the congregation is no small element in Confirmation—he is often pained and shocked to find in these people of good desires, an utter unreadiness, so far as concerns any clear understanding of the offices of the three Persons in the blessed Trinity, or any just conception of the duties of the Christian life.

On the other hand, there has been a time with us when Readiness was duly considered, and desire was little accounted of. Old-time people tell us, not unfrequently, that they were told they were old enough to be Confirmed; that they were simply examined upon the text of the Catechism, not one word being said of

personal direction or encouragement ; and so they were presented at the rail, rather offering no resistance, than coming of their own accord, and in the yearning of a personal desire.

We must avoid both of these errors, and strive to present to the Bishop those who are both ready and desirous to receive a large measure of the gifts of the Spirit.

* * * * * *

Notice has been given of Confirmation near at hand. For notice is required to be given, lest priest and people should be taken unawares.

Surely, in a well-ordered parish, and in a well-ordered household, it needs not now, that we shall *begin* to make ready our children. For the best and most substantial preparation for this rite is that which has been quietly going on day by day.

The prayers which the mother has early taught her children, the Scripture lessons imparted by the careful father, the frequent reminder that they are God's own children and members of the Lord's family, the persuading them, when they have misbehaved to go into

some quiet place and ask the Heavenly Father to forgive and help, the habit of joining with audible voice in public service, and listening heedfully to sermons, the careful catechizing of the clergyman, and the instruction given in the Sunday-school under his direction: we might extend the catalogue, but in general, the thousand and one little precepts, lessons, and spiritual exercises of childhood, each of them simple, easy, and in no way remarkable—these are the best means to make our children ready for Confirmation. Better these with no special preparation at all, than the very best special preparation of a few weeks, without the preface of daily nurture and devout habits.

But even where the utmost fidelity has been used in previous training, minister and people may both recognize that a season of special privilege and responsibility is at hand. Life has its critical periods, and the Confirmation time is, or ought to be, a period of deepest interest to every Christian child.

The value of the opportunity afforded to us by the notice of Confirmation deserves to be separately considered.

CHAPTER II.

CONFIRMATION AN OPPORTUNITY.

ALL prudent people strive to avail themselves of opportunities. There are "*mollia tempora fandi*" when advice finds a readier access to the heart. A good word has its excellence enhanced when it is spoken in season.

We have need to be careful how we obtrude religious counsel or offer religious teaching to others. A child impatient to get to his play, or a business man, just when a note in bank has to be provided for, is nothing the better, but rather made worse, by the expression of solicitude about his spiritual welfare. The mother (oh, how wise God has made her in what concerns the little ones !) knows the value of opportunity, and often reserves her comments until the evening fit of gravity comes on, when the restless ones sober down, and of their own accord nestle to her side.

We have need to make opportunities, just as

gardeners "make a season" for setting out their plants. But in the spiritual, as in the natural husbandry, there are no opportunities so favorable as those which come in the natural order of Divine Providence.

The Notice of Confirmation furnishes an opportunity to the clergyman, who has been delivering God's message all the year long, to urge a decision. I have been delivering a message; it deserves a reply; a few weeks hence you must come forward or sit still. "Now, therefore, advise," — there is time enough to weigh the whole matter deliberately; "advise and see *what answer I shall return* to Him that sent me."

It is a blessed opportunity, if the clergyman will realize it, without seeming to be obtrusive or officious, to individualize his teaching, and to make a direct and personal proffer of the blessings of the kingdom to man, woman, and child.

May I be allowed to illustrate?

In a parish where I once resided, the rector, a very faithful and earnest preacher (a man, I may add, who had a warm affection for a

Bishop much his junior, and was wont to receive his suggestions with all kindness), said sadly, that he feared no one would be presented at the Confirmation proposed to be held in a few weeks. No one had as yet come to him, and no one gave any evidence of special religious interest.

I said to him that I was sure there was far more religious concern in the congregation than he or I could possibly be aware of. I asked him to go home and make out a list of all the persons of sufficient age, who had come to church regularly, and behaved themselves with seeming reverence. And I proposed we should make the rounds of the parish together, and visit each person on the list.

This plan was faithfully carried out through several days. Much the same speech sufficed in all cases. It should be observed that we were in a missionary field, and not among people baptized and trained in the Church.

So we said to one and another, "We have observed you attending the services and taking part in our devotions. You have heard that there is presently to be a Confirmation, when

those who are ready and desirous may be admitted to the utmost privileges of the Church on earth. We do not know how much attention you have given to this subject, but we have called to give you a special invitation. *Come Thou with us.* We feared that you might not think yourself included in the general invitation, and so we come to you on purpose to say, that if you will address yourself to the duty of preparation, and will come with an honest purpose to take up your cross and follow Christ, you are a thousand times welcome. The Spirit and the Bride say come."

The revelations of the very first morning are not easily forgotten. The hard face of the man of business relaxed ; some few sentences he uttered, "I thank you kindly, gentlemen. No one ever showed as much interest in me before. I think about these matters more than I ever did in my life." And he accepted a tract on Confirmation with the promise to read it faithfully.

The light-hearted and apparently thoughtless girl was moved to tears by the kind invitation. "She was so wicked; we did not know how

wicked she was; she wished to be a Christian so much, but it seemed the more she tried the worse she became."

One man had tried over and over again to "get converted," and was not willing to be confirmed until the power of sin was effectually broken, and his "evidence" made as clear as the noonday; while another did not see his way clearly to profess his faith in the doctrine of the Trinity.

My good brother was astonished at the revelation of so much trouble and doubt and spiritual longing, lying but a little way beneath the surface of seeming indifference.

He sat musing by my fireside that evening, and exclaimed, "How is it that I never thought of this before?" He did not fail to follow up each individual with sympathy and counsel; nor did he fail to present for Confirmation a class most satisfactory in numbers and in character.

Why did not the rector ever think of this before? No one had ever told him that such a plan might be pursued; nay, more, his early theological associations had made him timid

about giving a direct and personal invitation to rites and sacraments, lest he might seem to attach undue value to them. So soon as he thought about it, he saw (none more clearly) that these are all opportunities to bring men to Christ, not rewards to be reserved for those who have fought and conquered without their aid.

In many of our rural parishes it is simply impossible to organize Confirmation classes for thorough and systematic teaching. The clergyman may, from the tower of his pulpit, exhaust a quiverful of the best-aimed arrows, and little will come of it. But if he will go to look for them, and search carefully from house to house, he will find the barb of a faithful, loving word, quivering in many a heart too full of trouble and of shame to utter the story of its grief, until a friendly word, a genial invitation, forbids it to keep silent.

It may be these lines will come under the eyes of the clergy of my own diocese. They may be read by some young presbyter in what men call a hard field, who has toiled all night and caught nothing.

Many of these expect an Episcopal visitation in the spring-time, in Lent, or after Easter.

I wish I could persuade them to try the plan alluded to *just once*. Make out your list of individuals who are with us but not of us. Express to every man and every woman of them, by himself and for himself, your affectionate desire that he may be ready for Confirmation when the Bishop comes. Do this as prudently and delicately as you can; but, at any rate, *do it*. Consent, beforehand, to have your feelings wounded by a rough answer, although few men are such brutes as to return it. If you make a mistake and do it ill, be not disheartened, but try again. Name your people, one by one, before God in prayer, beseeching Him that He will bring His sheep to the fold; follow them, one by one, with loving desire that they may convert and be healed; and I dare promise, you will never again be content to give notice of Confirmation and sit still, asking "that those who desire to be confirmed will please give in their names."

We must warm up our people beforehand, and not wait for the Confirmation Service to set

them aglow. People seem, with some little justice, to find excuse for their lethargy where the clergyman has not been enough awake to cry aloud in the ear of each slumberer.

Let me add an incident to which this remark may be an appropriate moral.

I once visited a parish where I expected to confirm a young lawyer, whom, years before, I had baptized in adult age, in another diocese. It so happened that he knew not of the expected visit, and he managed to avoid me at every turn.

I came another year; this time he sought me out, and carried me to his private room. He had books of devotion and instruction on his table, and had been preparing himself carefully to receive the laying on of hands.

When I rose to leave him, I laid my hand upon his shoulder, and said, "Come, now, and tell me frankly, why did you so carefully keep out of my way when I was last here?"

Said he, "I will tell the truth. I did not know you were coming; I had been very full of business, and, Bishop, I am ashamed to say it, but *you caught me cold!*"

CHAPTER III.

THE CONFIRMATION CLASS.

We have said that the very best preparation for Confirmation is that "bringing up to lead a godly and a Christian life" which begins in infancy, and is continued throughout the whole period of childhood.

And yet a special preparation, when notice of Confirmation has been given, is befitting and necessary. The value of well-organized and carefully-instructed Confirmation classes has been fully proved by experience.

There is something gained by bringing together into a room those who are likely to be candidates. They encourage and strengthen each other, and we are all creatures of sympathy. They even shelter each other, for some people are so shy that the very thought of a private conversation with the clergyman frightens them, whereas, they are very willing to be instructed by him in the company of others.

We ought to remember that with some people bashfulness is almost a disease. They listen with eagerness to what is said to others, but are so frightened by personal address, that they can scarcely hear or understand. Their confidence may be won, but cannot be forced.

Of course, there must be personal conference with each candidate before he is Confirmed. Of this we shall have something to say hereafter. It may suffice just here to observe, that the occasion of Confirmation affords to the faithful pastor an invaluable opportunity of winning the confidence of each lamb of the flock, and of establishing on an easy and familiar footing the spiritual relations which ought to exist in a well-ordered parish. The instruction of candidates in classes, so far from superseding private conference with the individual, ought rather to prepare the way for it, and make it easy.

How shall we begin in organizing a Confirmation class? Very much depends upon the terms of the invitation, and upon the pains taken to set the matter clearly before the minds

of the people. Certainly, a brief and formal notice does not meet the exigency.

The rector may well seek to impress upon the people the significance of an Episcopal visitation. Here is an interruption, we may even say a crisis, in the regular course of parish life. The chief officer, the overseer of the flock, comes to ascertain results, and to confer a gift, by the laying on of hands, upon such as are ready and desirous to receive it. Of the clergyman he demands, "Where is the flock that was given thee, the beautiful flock?" He challenges the sponsors of the years gone by. "You were warned to 'take care' of the Lord's little ones, and in due time to bring them to the Bishop. Have you been careful of them? Have you brought them? Are they all present here before God to hear the things that are commanded of God?"

Moreover, the occasion brings home to every baptized man and woman a distinct, personal responsibility. The Bishop comes, due notice being given, for a special purpose. The minister is required to "*bring or send in writing, with his hand subscribed thereto, the Names of*

all such Persons within his Parish as he shall think fit to be presented to the Bishop to be Confirmed."

Every baptized person, then, competent to be Confirmed, has a distinct issue presented to him. He must ratify and confirm his Christian vows, or he must neglect to do so. No one can sit still in his place, when this distinct and official demand touching his religious mind and purpose is made, without sin and spiritual loss.

Now let the clergyman be himself deeply impressed with the thought that the Confirmation season will present to individual souls an issue which cannot be avoided ; that when the Bishop stands up ready to bless in the Master's name, each man who for lack of readiness or desire fails to seek that blessing, will thereby grieve the Holy Spirit, and put aside a hand held out to strengthen him ; and he will scarce fail to impress upon the minds of others the conviction that there is a responsibility to be met, a blessing to be won or lost.

The minister, then, makes his invitation to include all, without any exception, who are of

sufficient age, to meet him in private. He may find it expedient to separate adults and children. He should be at pains to explain that those who shall attend the class do not pledge themselves to be Confirmed; possibly the minister himself may not think it best to include all of them on his list when the time arrives.

Let it be understood that they consent to be instructed. They agree to afford the man of God an opportunity to teach them their duty, to explain to them the qualifications necessary for Confirmation and the Lord's Supper, and to bring home to them personally the various considerations which should influence every child of privilege to render to Almighty God the humble return of voluntary submission and of grateful vows.

And it should be further understood that the minister will not take any undue advantage of those who shall attend, by close questions in the presence of others, touching their religious experience. Some people, very willing and anxious to be taught, would be frightened clean away by the prospect of any such examination.

In conducting a Confirmation class, pains may well be taken to avoid formality. Everything should be easy, familiar, colloquial. I would avoid using the church or the lecture-room for this purpose. If the clergyman is so fortunate as to have a convenient study, that is the best place of all. Parson and people have a home-like feeling when they come together upon a sort of half-way ground; and, indeed, it is worth something to teach our people the way to the rector's study. They will find it more easily in some after-day, when they need comfort or counsel.

The instruction may well be preceded by the Lord's Prayer and a few collects. As the class progresses, and a deeper seriousness pervades it, the devotional element may be increased. The litany used alone is well adapted to this purpose.

It is of advantage to induce our catechumens to trust themselves to speak. For this reason a responsive service is useful, and it is well to ask one and another to read the references from Bible and Prayer-Book.

The Confirmation service itself, as we hope

to show hereafter, affords the best outline of instruction. But in connection with this didactic instruction, pains should be taken to interest and animate the class by illustration. If the clergyman will be at the trouble, it will not be hard to find a sacred lyric, a scrap of religious biography, or a narrative, which will serve an admirable purpose in fixing the impressions of the lesson. In the seven volumes of "Tracts for Parochial Use" we have found not a few selections which were listened to at the close of the regular lesson with interest and sometimes with emotion.

It may seem to some that in this paper we have made too much of diffidence, and of the means to be used in overcoming it.

Certainly our remarks do not apply to many parishes. There are some happy instances in which the children sit so habitually at the feet of the minister, and are so gently led along in the way of Christian nurture, that the difficulty in question does not exist.

But in most of our parishes there are many persons who, although baptized, have had no religious training. They are ignorant, but

ashamed to confess their ignorance ; anxious to know what they must do to be saved, and yet nervous under questioning ; not without veneration for the Church and her teachings, and yet distracted and confused by reason of the multiplicity of opposing doctrines.

To bring such persons closer to himself, to quiet them and put them at their ease, to let them see that our holy religion is not so dreadful a thing to talk about, and thus to prepare the way for unreserved, personal teaching and guidance, such should be the object of the parish priest in organizing and conducting his classes for Confirmation.

CHAPTER IV.

PARENTS AND SPONSORS AT CONFIRMATION TIME.

In gathering our classes for Confirmation, it would seem that the clergy might safely count upon the sympathy and active co-operation of the natural and spiritual guardians of Christ's little ones.

But who knows not the disappointment of finding small encouragement from those whose responsibility is as real as our own? How often, when we would fain teach the dear children to understand and to claim their high privileges, do we find ourselves just here repressed, obstructed, and even frustrated in our holy endeavors!

Doubtless we ourselves are partly to blame: we think so much of our preaching and so little of our pastorate; we are so little faithful in the industrious, painstaking care of individual souls, that the people will not commit their children to us with unreserved confidence. I

confess that I sympathize with the uneasiness felt by thoughtful parents, lest the boy or girl may be drawn on to Confirmation with no more than a mere flutter of good impulses, and without that sober and godly determination necessary in so important a transaction.

It is well worth while to allay any such apprehensions; to assure parents that their advice will not be disregarded, and that the child's name will not be entered on the list without careful consideration.

The fault is, however, not all ours. One can hardly tell how it is or why it is, but there are not a few who deem it a duty to hold back the clergyman whenever he attempts any earnest course. So soon as the Church begins to move with anything like activity and speed, it seems that certain men and women, as by instinct, spring to the brakes and "slow the train" down again.

And so when the clergyman begins his round, and strives to awaken his people to the blessedness of the Confirmation time, he sometimes finds the tables turned upon him. He must sit still and listen very meekly to expla-

nations of what true religion is. The father who has evinced little concern at the religious indifference of his children, is shocked and alarmed at the thought of their being Confirmed unless they are entirely changed, and unless they are entirely satisfied they can "hold out."

The truth is that there is nothing whereof this American people is more hopelessly incredulous than of the reality of childish piety. We find it hard to believe that the Holy Ghost is present with a light-hearted child. We parents are sometimes wretchedly uncharitable toward our own offspring, in assuming that the existence of so many faults is not consistent with anything of religious purpose.

Oh, what would become of us grown-up people, if, in our gropings along the narrow way, our spiritual fathers discouraged us and doubted us, as many good Christian people doubt and discourage their children!

Moreover, there lingers in many of our country parishes the notion that conversion is a momentary act, not the coming gently into flower of a plant long cultivated and steadily

growing; we even imagine that it is something that "happens" to one and not to another, and which man can do little or nothing to promote.

The Church atmosphere is, unconsciously to ourselves, infected with false notions as to the very nature of experimental piety. We say in our severity, that they who come to the Lord's Supper ought to be very saintly people; and so we load upon the shoulders of a child a heavy burden, which neither we nor our fathers could have borne, had it been insisted on as a prerequisite, when we were Confirmed and admitted to the Holy Communion.

Now, we hope it will appear as these chapters progress, that so far from depriving Confirmation of its just conditions, we are most earnest in opposing that perversion of this sacred transaction which would bring to it persons who do not hunger and thirst after righteousness. But we do earnestly warn parents and sponsors against the cruel uncharitableness of telling the child, that in your judgment he is too thoughtless, or too wicked *to enter upon a course of preparation for Confirmation.*

Please mark the words we have italicized. That is what your minister asks first of all, and that is what some parents are reluctant about. If the child were fully ready and desirous, this preliminary instruction would be superfluous for him. The very design of the instruction is to fit and to prepare him for the proper reception of the rite. How is he ever to become fit unless those human means are used which the Holy Ghost blesses for spiritual growth ?

I have been pleading with parents and sponsors not to obstruct the clergyman. Let me go farther and tell them that there is a call upon them as much as upon the clergyman, to active effort. For the sake of distinctness, let me specify a few things which Christian parents (and under this term I include sponsors) may do and ought to do when notice is given of Confirmation near at hand.

1. The parent should anticipate the invitation of the pastor, and the request of the child. He should be the first to introduce the subject. You have often desired to get closer to your child and to know more of his inner life. What

an opportunity you have now to do this easily and naturally !

What more natural than to avail yourself of some suitable time and place, to tell him the thoughts awakened in your mind by this notice, and your anxiety that your household may share in the blessing which God's minister is to dispense ?

Most probably the child is thinking about it, and is saying to himself that he would like to begin a better life. But he is doubtful of his own sincerity, and afraid lest he may be suspected of hypocrisy. The smoking flax of a child's spiritual yearning is easily quenched ; a smile of mistrust may suffice to that end ; whereas, a gentle breath of encouragement may kindle it into a flame.

Let parents then encourage their children in seeking instruction and guidance. Explain to them that although you have frequent occasion to find fault, you give them credit for a desire to do better. Make them understand that the Christian life is progressive, and that the sense of deficiencies, however humiliating, must not be allowed to keep us away from the means of grace.

You may hope, little by little, thus to gain the religious confidence of the child. A blessed moment is that in the life of a Christian child when, of his own accord, he lets out his heart's trouble to father or mother!

2. Moreover, the parent should himself instruct the child in reference to Confirmation.

We have need to realize that the priesthood of the Church does not dispense with the priesthood of the family. It is no part of God's plan that the clergy should relieve us of our home duties and responsibilities. No matter how zealous the pastor may be, no matter how complete the arrangements for catechism and Sunday-school, there is room, there is need, for the fire that glows on the home altar, and for the holy lessons of the family hearth.

Father and mother, then, may well accompany the child, as it were, from step to step; going over the Confirmation lesson with him, asking of him what he has learned of the minister, supplementing and explaining those teachings. It may be doubted whether in any age the Church has been so well furnished with helps for this purpose—so many, so varied, so

interesting are the books published for the instruction of those who are to be confirmed.

3. The parent may well, at such a time, protect his child, with special vigilance, from temptations and danger.

It is all important that sobriety should be encouraged. He should be shielded from too much observation, and opportunities for privacy should be afforded him. With a little thoughtfulness, distractions may be avoided, and his mind habitually directed to the duty next before him.

These are but scanty hints; but if we could only realize the readiness of our Heavenly Father to bless our humble endeavors, how much good might be done by the efforts of parents and sponsors at Confirmation time!

CHAPTER V.

TEXT-BOOKS FOR CONFIRMATION.

If one is to teach anything methodically, he must determine upon a method to teach by.

Now it is generally agreed in all departments of education, that the best system is to combine (1) familiar oral explanation, (2) constant reference to books of weight and authority, and (3) the habitual use of some syllabus, some compendious and practical hand-book, wherein the more important matters shall be set out methodically and succinctly.

Following this well-approved system, the clergyman proposes to teach his candidates by word of mouth. His books of reference are the books of the Old and New Testaments. These are the living oracles; out of them all his instructions are drawn. He is sworn to teach, as necessary to salvation, nothing that is not contained therein or may not be proved thereby. It is his delight to "open the Script-

ures," to quote them, to draw from them his proofs and his illustrations, and to persuade his flock to search them and to meditate upon them.

But the practical questions come up (and we are striving to deal with practical questions), What outline shall I follow? What text-book shall I use? On what thread shall I string my pearls of doctrine?

To this question we are bold to answer, in a word, THE CONFIRMATION OFFICE ITSELF; or, in ampler phrase, *The Confirmation Office in all its relations and connections with our other formularies.* The very best text-book or syllabus we can possibly provide is the familiar, well-used Book of Common Prayer.

How to use this text-book it will be our endeavor to show at some length hereafter. Just now we are chiefly concerned to persuade some brother younger in the ministry, that, while there are many very valuable books which he may study with advantage, the text-book to follow in his teachings is the Prayer-Book itself.

It is obvious that the method we recommend

has the advantage of precision and definiteness, and in pursuing it carefully, we are cultivating a certain accuracy of conscience.

Consider how careless we are in this age and country about oaths and promises. If a petition is circulated in the community, man after man will be content to ask its general purport, and, thereupon, append his signature without reading the statements for which he becomes responsible.

Now people all about us are making what is called "a profession of religion." How widely do they differ in their understanding of the obligation! How often do men mean no more by it than the expression of a general and vague purpose to amend their ways, and lead a religious life! And afterward they fight as uncertainly as they enlisted.

If we are to prepare people for Confirmation, the straightforward method is to set the office itself before their eyes, and keep it there. This, we may say, is the covenant to which you must at this time subscribe. It is written in plain characters, and in definite terms. This, neither more nor less, is what you

are to promise. Weigh well its every syllable, and consider that the vow once made binds you, in the very terms in which you made it, forever afterward.

Another consideration of like force in favor of this method of teaching is that we teach our young people the habit of resting with confidence upon the good sense and safe guidance of Mother Church herself, rather than of the individual clergyman.

Too often Christian people unconsciously say, I am of Apollos. The individual clergyman becomes the stay and support of their religious life. If separated from him in after-life, or if, perchance, the clergyman by some fault forfeits their confidence, they are left helpless and without a guide. And so I think we have need, not to repel our people's trust and faith in our own selves, but as the young branches of the vine begin to shoot, with a gentle touch to unclasp many a tendril beginning to wrap itself around a temporary support, and guide it to the trellis which will abide when we are dead and gone.

Many years ago I was very kindly taken to

task by a brother minister for using this phrase, "Mother Church," in "Letters to a Man Bewildered." He found himself unable to make use of the tract by reason of this phrase. "The Church is not our mother," said he, "for we are the Church." And then he added, dolefully, that there was a great deficiency of sound religious literature. The only religious book he "could circulate with confidence was Coleridge's Aids to Reflection, and that the people would not read."

The Bible assures us that the Church is the Bride of Christ, and the spiritual mother of His children. Who is ignorant of the glowing chapters of Isaiah, wherein the Church is comforted by the assurance that her Maker is her husband; that her children shall be so many that she shall have occasion to say, Who hath begotten me all these? The promise concerning Jerusalem is, "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream; then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees." Who doubts that this is that Jerusasalem whereof St. Paul says, "Jerusalem which

is above is free, which is the MOTHER of us all?" We are no longer "children of the bond-woman, but of the free." Who is that free woman, to be recognized as our mother, unless it be the holy Church, which Christ so loved that He gave Himself for it, and of which He is the head, even as the husband is the head of the wife? Yes, there is marvel here, which none of us can fathom, and which none should presume to deny. "*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.*"

If any say that all these passages refer to an invisible Church, I would reply that this is an excess of sublimation that, logically carried out, would land us all in Quakerism. The Church presented to us in Holy Scripture is a visible body, with offices and ordinances, with visible privileges and means of grace.

To many the Church is no more than a nurse, valuable for the time, and easily exchanged for another. But how different is a mother from a mere nurse! How pitiable is

the case of those who are wandering through this world of conflicting opinions with some traditional reverence for the services they have been wont to attend, with much affection for some individual man of God, but with no knowledge of a spiritual mother, to whose counsel they may resort, and on whose guidance they may rely in every emergency. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem!" Has that song lost its meaning to Christian people? Is there nowhere on earth the mother, never to be forgotten, and on whom, with our latest breath, we may invoke a blessing?

The sum of the matter is, that we should be very careful, in teaching our young people, to conciliate their confidence for the Church rather than for ourselves. We should tell them that we are but individuals among a great body of teachers, and are liable to prejudice and mistake; but the Church, the teaching mother, is wiser and more reliable than any of her Doctors.

Confirmation affords us an admirable opportunity to show the wisdom, the gentleness, the evangelical unction which pervades the whole

system of the Church. Happy the child who has not been taught that one mother is as good as any other, but who believes in his *own* dear mother, and takes for granted, until the opposite can be proved, that she will never mislead her dutiful children! To promote these ends, let our hand-book be the Book of Common Prayer.

CHAPTER VI.

CONFIRMATION A CONVENIENT SEASON.

We may suppose that the members of the Confirmation class have come together for instruction, and we now proceed to develop somewhat methodically, the character of the lessons which may be given.

As the clergyman looks upon the faces of the company, he sees in some an expression of sobriety and interest, while in others it is sadly wanting. Some have come with good-will, others to please their friends, and others again, out of mere curiosity. Some of the number are very likely to drop off of themselves after a little.

The pastor's first effort, it would seem, may well be directed to the deepening and intensifying of the impulses, so far as they are good, which have brought these young people into closer contact with himself. If there be the appearance of awkwardness and restraint, nay,

if perchance (for such things do happen), two or three exchange a silly smile, let not these be noticed. He may be sure that while he converses with the gravity suited to the occasion, those who are the subjects of any real religious solicitude will become sober enough, and those whose levity cannot be abated, are not likely to continue in an ungenial atmosphere.

He may well, as his first instruction, urge upon his pupils the value of the Confirmation time, as affording a "convenient season" to determine the most momentous question of our earthly life, whether we shall live to God, or live as if there were no God.

In one sense, there is no such thing as a convenient season. If one desire merely to find an excuse for neglect of holy things, he can find something in every season of life which renders it inconvenient to grapple with the great question to be determined. In youth we are so gay, in middle-life so busy, in old age so fixed in our habits: in health our spirits are so exuberant, and in sickness they are so much depressed, that men pass through all these phases of life, climb up its heights of success and sound

its lowest depths of adversity, without ever finding the day or the hour appropriate for seeking the face of God.

There is no such thing as a convenient season to the man who waits for the dawning of some auspicious morning, when he may address himself to this duty, without hindrance, and without reluctance.

Again, there is a sense in which every season is convenient. God is always ready to be entreated. He is very near to every one of us, if only we will feel after him. We may select the time in all the year, or in all man's life, which seems most infelicitous; the day when most of all, he is care-laden, tempted, distressed, shut out from opportunities of privacy, and yet that is a convenient season, if only the man cries out to God for help.

I believe that there is need to enlarge very much upon these propositions, simple and self-evident as they seem. There are people, on the one hand, who persuade themselves that it is useless to address themselves to religious duty until there shall come a spontaneous softening of the hard heart, a lull in the storm of tempta-

tion; and there are others who are waiting for an auspicious time, a vacation, Lent, or, oftener still, the next revival, to seek God's face. I was told not long since (may the reader pardon these familiar illustrations; they assist us to understand what is in the minds of multitudes of people) of a well-meaning man visiting a sick person. He prayed with her, exhorted her, and made her promise "to seek religion so soon as she should recover!"

But, for all this, there is such a thing as "the convenient season." Our life flows not onward in uninterrupted monotony. Times there are of special privilege and of more definite responsibility. Times there are when our duty stands out more clearly before us, and when many good influences are brought to bear upon us; times when indecision, always wrong, becomes a more presumptuous sin, and when negligence, always a resisting of God's Holy Spirit, amounts to a more deliberate grieving away of the Comforter.

But let us be a little more explicit concerning that great question which must be met at some time or other, if we would enter into life.

However we be bound together in one body, and have in common a corporate life in the Church of Christ, yet has every individual soul its distinct, personal responsibility. It may be that the privileges of the covenant of God in Christ have been generously accorded to us when we could not so much as comprehend the plan of mercy ; but for all that, so soon as we can comprehend it, and are capable of a reasonable and voluntary choice, every man must of his own free-will and accord accept the pardon offered him through the blood of the Atonement ; he must consent to make duty to God the supreme law of his actions, and the glory of God the object of his whole life. Moreover, he must renounce all self-confidence, and agree to live and labor in daily dependence upon a gracious influence above nature, which the Holy Ghost alone imparts. To sum it up in few words, this transaction between God and the soul of man culminates in that intelligent and absolute surrender of ourselves expressed in the words, "Not my will but Thine be done."

In the case of children, Almighty God, in

His love and wisdom, provides a most convenient season for this transaction to be perfected. At the age when they are competent to come, understandingly, to his Holy table, Confirmation is the preparation for that approach. God forbid that any should dislocate it from this, its just connection!

We may well ask a thoughtful child, when can you hope to find a time so suitable? Nothing can be farther from your present purpose than to live and die without making sure your relations with Almighty God. In His goodness He gives you, just as you place your foot on the threshold of manly life, a special summons, an audible message. He says: "My son, give Me thy heart."

Yes, for the reason that you are His son, give Him your heart. As yet, though you have much sinned against Him, you have not defied Him, nor ceased to pray to Him. Easier is it to repent of the errors of childhood and to surrender a heart defiled, but not all gone to waste, than to consent, late in life, to that agonizing self-contradiction which is the portion of men who, after long years of irreligion, be-

gin, with shame, to retrace their steps, seeking to be converted and become as little children again.

You have your troubles, to be sure. All children have their serious griefs ; but, as yet, you have not yet that burden of care which older people find so distracting, when they would turn their thoughts heavenward. You have now protection, teaching, religious sympathy. In later life these do not so much abound. You have now less of false shame to resist. Oh, how hard it is for a grown man to begin as a little child in the school of Christ, with so many censorious eyes fastened upon him ; but even the world itself is disposed to make allowance for children just beginning to bear the weight of a warrior's armor, just assuming a place in the line of battle.

This interval between the immaturity of infancy and the hardened stature of manhood ; this time of exemption from the absolute restraints of childhood and the heavy responsibilities of adult age, is a propitious time to ask the question in view of all the future : "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and having

LIBRARY

heard the answer, by His grace to determine: "All that the Lord hath spoken, that will I observe and do."

If any other argument be needed, we seem to find it in that special promise given to young people, so plain that all can understand it; so positive that none has a right to doubt it: "I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me."

There are those in our classes, however, who are not children. The age of thirty, forty, or fifty has found them in the world and of the world. All these years they have halted between two opinions, and now, in the providence of God, by coming forward for definite instruction, they have made the first decided step toward the strait gate so long avoided.

Surely, this is to them emphatically the convenient season; unto him that hath shall be given; how much will be taken away if they carelessly surrender this small advantage! What a help to wavering, inconstant mortals to have a definite issue made up! to have the question simplified to this, Will you honestly, as in the sight of God, prepare yourself to

accept a blessing which, on a day appointed, His minister will offer to you? Above all is this the convenient season, because it is the present time. Of the morrow we have no assurance; and this consideration, though men may call it trite, commonplace, and the like, is one that no prudent man can ever disregard, and of which we of the clergy must constantly remind our people.

And thus we are led to mention the sin and the danger of procrastination, a theme which admits of much variety in treatment and illustration. Some such reading as "By-and-by"* in the Tracts for Parochial Use may well conclude the lesson. The minister will not have made a bad beginning if he has succeeded in making one distinct impression upon the minds of his pupils—namely, that this time, and not some other fancied season of greater suitableness, is the "convenient season" to weigh and determine the great issues of life and death.

All this, let me add, should be uttered, not

* "Tracts for Parochial Use," 7 vols.; J. H. Parker, Oxford, 1852. The writer has found these volumes especially valuable in preparing candidates for Confirmation.

sermon-fashion, but in the way of grave yet friendly talk. If the minister thinks he has no gift in this direction, let him, none the less, attempt this colloquial style. As he realizes the truth, all imagination and rhetoric aside, that some before him are at a crisis in their religious life, that if not now persuaded to perfect their repentance, they are likely, as common experience shows, to draw back beyond his reach, and to defer repentance for long years, perhaps forever ; as he bethinks himself that holy angels watch the workings of one and another young heart, congratulating each other when one who had been used to say prayers by custom, enters his closet and shuts the door, and prays from the depth of an awakened conscience,—as all this becomes real, the man of God will find words. Stammering, confused, inelegant they may be ; but effective words because so full of love and unfeigned solicitude. Few people can resist the pathos of a pastor's loving anxiety.

It is in this, I fear, that we of the clergy are most deficient. We give anything more freely than love. We are content to study and write,

to undergo fatigue and exposure, to endure poverty and hardness; and all these fail of their end for lack of one other thing which should crown them all, that tender compassion for the individual soul which makes us think of it and pray for it.

The most stammering tongue is eloquent for God, when in compassion for the sheep the man forgets all else, save that he is their shepherd, and that unless he folds them early, before the dark comes on, safely, where the walls are strong, the wolf may come and make havoc of the blood-bought flock.

CHAPTER VII.

PREREQUISITES FOR CONFIRMATION.

TAKING up the office of Confirmation for careful examination, we may notice that certain things are designated, expressly or by implication, as *Prerequisites* for Confirmation.

They are not *Qualifications* for the reception of that rite. Because they all concur in the case of an individual, it by no means follows that he is fit to be Confirmed; but without their concurrence he is not a proper subject for the laying on of hands.

These prerequisites seem to be four in number, viz.: (1) birthright, (2) age, (3) maturity, and (4) knowledge.

Confirmation is proffered, not to strangers and aliens, but to those who have already a birthright in the Church, that is, to baptized persons.

We are not to persuade our catechumens to

enter into a covenant with God, but to ratify a covenant already in existence.

Obvious as this may seem, we are in some danger of overlooking this distinction. For instance, in our zeal for Confirmation we may exaggerate its place in the Christian system, and magnify it as of equal importance with the two Sacraments, which are "generally necessary to salvation." Extravagant teaching of any sort defeats itself. So long as we urge the duty of being Confirmed, and the spiritual benefits therein conveyed by the Holy Ghost to those who come aright, we are on safe ground. But if we attribute to it that paramount importance which belongs to the two Sacraments alone, those whom we teach may well challenge the soundness of our instructions.

In a Confirmation class there are apt to be some unbaptized persons. I have nothing to say against the instruction of baptized and unbaptized together, only a line of distinction should be clearly drawn. But sometimes baptism is regarded merely as a stepping-stone to Confirmation. The baptism is done, as it were, in a corner, hastily, at some odd time,

while the Bishop is robing in the vestry. The interest, the fervor and yearning of the soul, are reserved for the Confirmation.

The clergy observe that the Bishop seems not very well pleased when he finds minister and people in haste to "get through" with certain baptisms, necessary to be performed in order to Confirmation; they impute his restlessness to this addition to the length of the services.

But if one will only think a moment, he must see that baptism is too grave a transaction to be thus hastily performed. To me the baptism of an adult is a service, in point of solemnity, I will even say awfulness, equalled by but one other in the Prayer-Book. The mention of this rite, and this alone, in the Apostolic commission, invests it with deepest significance; and then, if one at all realizes what he is doing, it seems the sublimity of courage for a sinful creature, who has been bound of the evil one many years, to rise up in the congregation, and

"Confident in self-despair,"

renounce and defy the prince of darkness.

It is true that we cannot bring people to baptism just when we like. It often happens that a man has doubts and fears which are dispelled only at the last moment, and we must baptize him when he is ready. But even then the baptism should be performed very deliberately, and the candidate should be urged to prepare himself for it, as the rubric directs.

We are more in danger, however, of another error, that of instructing our baptized people as if they were unbaptized. How many sermons and Confirmation lectures have we heard wherein there was no recognition of the difference between the children and the strangers! Not only is this course wrong in theory, but it frustrates our endeavors. For if this baptized child has not fallen away from God, if he has led a life of prayer and faith, we do him an injury, we distress and discourage him by addressing him as an alien. And if this baptized child has led an irreligious and worldly life, it is just this circumstance of his admission already into covenant with God which aggravates his sin, and which we should urge upon his

awakened conscience! Nay, more, the best encouragement to repentance we can offer him is to be found in the fact that he is a child of promise, and has the child's privilege to repent and be forgiven.

Consider that wonderful parable of the Prodigal Son. If the young man had been nobody's child; if he had from the first been cast out into the open street, we would expect nothing better than to find him a swineherd by-and-by. The mournful feature in his case is just this: he had a father, and turned away from him. He had a home, and abandoned it. He was free-born, but dissatisfied with the glorious liberty of a child and heir, and affecting a larger freedom, he hired himself to a citizen of that country where shame and famine are inevitable. When we paint that picture, it is not enough to exhibit the outlines of destitution and wretchedness. That downcast face must be permitted to show in its soiled features some evidence of the blood of kings; those mean vestments must be not the coarse rags of a beggar born, but the torn, defiled coat of many colors, provided by a wealthy father for

his darling. We miss the point of the parable, unless we make this the chief element in this young man's wretchedness—viz., *that he was his father's son.*

Now, if we of the clergy, and the laity too, lay no stress on this; if we seem to think it the most natural thing that God's adopted children should stray away into strange lands and serve other masters, how can the children but think of it as a thing of course? What must such a one suppose when he finds no difference made between his case and that of one never called, never adopted, never taught to lisp Abba, Father.

I am not concerned just here to urge any special view of baptism. I urge only that we of the clergy should make practical and effective that which we agree to hold without debate, the admission of the baptized child to a state of special privilege and responsibility. Let us, as the case requires, draw from this consideration arguments and appeals to intensify gratitude or penitence.

By placing this inquiry in the forefront, "Have you been baptized or no?" the clergy-

man will remind his young people, that if they have been walking uprightly, all is due to God's preventing grace; and, if otherwise, theirs is the added fault of those who sin against blessing and privilege.

CHAPTER VIII.

PREREQUISITES FOR CONFIRMATION, CONTINUED.

BESIDES the prerequisite for Confirmation of being by baptism members of the Church, there are several others necessary to be considered. Such as age, maturity, and knowledge.

I can but think that the dear old Church is wiser than any of us, and that we would do well in our ministry to consult her mind instead of our own frail judgment. Nor am I at all moved by the consideration that sundry Churches have grievously erred.

There have been some very bad mothers in the world; but that is no reason why children, whose mothers are not bad, should throw away filial reverence. And ours is a good mother and a wise. In a practical question like this viz., the age suitable for Confirmation, I pity the young pastor who is afraid to open the book and ask, What does my mother bid me?

It is very plain from the Prayer-Book that

children are to be confirmed. It is "*children, come to a competent age,*" who are to be brought. The Bishop "*shall give knowledge for Children to be brought unto him for their Confirmation.*" The preface to the office itself, which seems to some superfluous, and at times unsuitable, obliges us to remind our people of the special "convenience" or adaptation of Confirmation to children baptized in their infancy.

We need not fear, then, to lay it down as a first principle that we must do our very best to bring every child, within our cure, to Confirmation while he is yet a child. We are not to wait for him to come to adult age, nor to congratulate ourselves upon the fact (alas! we read it thus occasionally in the papers) that "the Bishop confirmed a large and interesting class, chiefly adults, and including some of the most influential citizens of the community."

It needs moral courage to maintain and to carry out in practice the theory that children should come, while yet children, to Confirmation and to the Lord's Supper. We are unconsciously infected by the unbelief which

prevails around us. It needs faith to realize that the gentle, modest boy of fourteen, who has never been contaminated by sordid and filthy sins, is a more valuable accession to our list of communicants than the man of worldly position and influence who turns abruptly in middle age from the ways of open irreligion. A child's faults lie, as it were, upon the surface; he has not had time to learn the arts of concealment. It requires faith to take by the hand a child whose infirmities of idleness, impatience, or self-indulgence are well-known to us, and to encourage him to take to himself the whole armor of God.

Who knows not the influence upon man or child which comes from the knowledge that something is expected of him?

Charles Simeon, in his autobiography, tells this story: He went to Cambridge an irreligious, prayerless young man. After a time a notice was served upon him that on a day specified he was expected to receive the Holy Communion. Some such condition, if I remember aright, was attached to the scholarship which he held.

"Expected to receive," was his thought. "Why, the devil himself is as fit to receive as I am." Yet he must go or surrender all his noblest aims in life. His conscience would not permit him to go without the wedding garment required in Holy Scripture. Thus he addressed himself, as well as he might, to the work of preparation. He sought in vain among his acquaintances for any real Christian sympathy and for any right guidance to a troubled soul. His only helps were his Bible, his Prayer-Book, and a devout volume or two which he heard of as adapted to his case.

But he came forward at the time appointed. He mentions a little circumstance which shows how gracious God had been to him in assisting his endeavors. That which remained of the consecrated bread being handed him, as he consumed a portion, he put his hat before his face and prayed. He noticed among the bystanders a smile at a reverence so unusual; but he adds that they would not have wondered if they could but have known from how great a burden God, in mercy, had delivered his soul.

A narrative like this frightens one. How dangerous an experiment, how unpardonable a temptation to any young man! We all unite to reprobate an injunction like this, requiring a man without any regard to his fitness, to come to the Lord's table. And yet we see in this very notable instance, how the supposed necessity of presenting himself at a certain time, aroused the conscience and induced the man "to make haste and delay not the time to keep God's commandments."

And now I would ask, can we not secure the same wholesome influence, without incurring risk and without lowering the standard of spirituality? Suppose that throughout our whole communion, every Priest deemed it his duty to present the children, while yet children, for Confirmation. Suppose that fathers and mothers let their children see that they expected this of them, and had set their hearts upon it. Suppose that this principle was too well settled for there to be anything of controversy or debate about it, so that the Priest, instead of being content to present a few elect ones among his lambs, should be distressed and

grieved at the necessity of omitting a single name from his list. Suppose that parents, while carefully refraining from anything like dragging a child to Confirmation, would show themselves sorrowful and disappointed, when, for want of due preparation, he was debarred this privilege.

Who can tell the influence of this loving, hopeful expectation, in inducing our children, while yet children, to give their hearts to God! How would "our sons be as plants grown up in their youth, our daughters as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."

Some may say this is fanciful and visionary, so slow are we, priests and people, to believe that we may, by work and prayer, win for others the awakening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost. Some may argue that this theory promotes formalism, as, indeed, it will do if we press Confirmation without proper religious qualification.

But the mind of the Church is clear and unmistakable. We are to take care that the children come before childhood has passed away. In the service, "This thy child," is the desig-

nation of the candidate that comes first to our mother's lips.

While the Church thus recognizes children as suitable subjects, she by no means proposes to confirm little children, incapable, by reason of their tender years, of ratifying understandingly a solemn compact.

Religious knowledge is made requisite. True, the requirement to know the Catechism is very moderate, and does not exceed the capacity of many a child seven years old. But we must remember that this is the *minimum* of qualification, and it must be supplemented, where the case admits, by the injunction that the child should be taught, besides the Catechism, "all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health."

Moreover, a certain maturity is presupposed. Not all children are fit to be confirmed, but "children being come to years of discretion;" that is, discreet children; children capable of forming a judgment for themselves, and possessing the character and will needed to qualify them for the performance of a free act.

I need not enter into any curious discussion

as to the force of this expression, "years of discretion." The service itself is the best commentary upon it. We know that at some periods the laying on of hands followed immediately upon baptism. But our Church administers baptism to infants, and reserves Confirmation for children come to years of discretion.

Consider what the child is to do as his own part in Confirmation. He comes, with full knowledge of what others have done in his behalf, to ratify and confirm a promise, and that openly and in a formal act. He professes to believe certain truths, he promises to renounce certain sins, he agrees to render a definite obedience to certain precepts. Clearly, it is our duty to restrain him from precipitancy. Until he is old enough and mature enough to understand the true nature and responsibility of the Christian covenant, he is not ready, however desirous he may be. We *bring* him to Confirmation, and yet he must *come* of his own accord, and act upon his own responsibility.

The Bishops of the Church, as a rule, do not like to confirm very young children. It seems to be agreed that the age of fourteen is the

most suitable age ; but a precise and invariable standard cannot be laid down. We see children of fourteen sometimes who are yet so child-like that their Confirmation may well be postponed. And again, we find children not more than twelve who, by reason of thoughtfulness, conscientiousness, and devout affection, are so well prepared that it would be a grief to them to keep them back.

Great caution should be used in bringing these very young children to Confirmation ; and yet we must be careful not to discourage them. If we put them off, we should explain to them that we do so not from distrust of their sincerity, but with the desire that they may derive the utmost benefits from the ordinance.

When I have found some dear child much disappointed, I have sometimes succeeded in clearing his brow by suggesting the case of the baby brother at home ; he does not come to the table, but he is none the less the father's child. The nursery suits him best just now. And so I would say : " Have confidence in your pastor and your parents ; we do not doubt your desire to draw nearer to our Lord ; but, then,

we think that your Confirmation and First Communion will be more profitable to you, if you prepare for them a little longer."

Thus have I touched upon the Prerequisites for Confirmation ; and I must remind my readers again, that the concurrence of them all—baptism, age, knowledge, and maturity—by no means insures proper qualification. But these Prerequisites indicate the class of persons to whom, first of all, our invitation should be addressed to come and make themselves ready.

I confess that I have seen children presented who caused me anxiety. They were too young to appreciate rightly the significance of what they were about. But this error of precipitation is small compared with the common error of neglect. If every child were, at the age of twelve to fourteen, distinctly called, personally invited, earnestly persuaded to study the terms of his baptismal engagement, and to adopt the covenant as his own, howbeit some would refuse, many would hearken. And that which men deem a very miracle of grace, the uninterrupted development of blade and ear and full

corn in the ear, would be recognized as the frequent gift of God to patient souls, who despise not His little ones.

Dear reader, all this is not a dream or a fancy.

I once watched by the bed of a Christian man, the fragrance of whose good example filled all the atmosphere in which he moved.

In the dark night he awoke, and began to converse somewhat on this wise :

" I know that we ought not to say anything good of ourselves ; but still we ought not, out of humility, to forbear making mention of the loving-kindness of the Lord. The crisis of my life was when I left my father's house, and went to school among bad boys. I thank God, and under God, my parents, who taught me aright, that the first time vile words were spoken in my presence, I had the courage to rebuke them ; and that always after I resisted the evil. It was the greatest blessing of my life."

I was moved to ask him : " Was there ever the time in all your recollection when you turned away from God ? When you ceased to look to Him, to love Him, and pray to him ? "

He considered awhile, and answered reverently : " Never in all my life."

Oh, when shall we realize that the Church's work is not merely to revive dead souls, but to keep alive the living babes of Christ !

CHAPTER IX.

THE COVENANT RATIFIED.

If we have lingered long over considerations preliminary to Confirmation, it has been in order that we might the better grasp the essential principles that are bound up in it.

Let us now take the office itself in hand. We read the question addressed by the Bishop to the candidates. Its purport is briefly this: Do you, of your own free-will, ratify and confirm the Covenant of God?

We must not let our young people suppose that they are now to *enter into* a Covenant with God, and to make terms with a justly offended master. No; the Covenant has already been made. In this we find our chief encouragement to repentance, and the utmost stimulus to obedience.

The great God is so good and gracious, that we might well, in the absence of any Covenant,

surrender at discretion, and intrust our all to His compassion. Even if we were not sure of His mercy, the safest course for us, so desperate is our case, would be to approach His footstool, and uncalled though we be, of the King, to risk all, in the hope that the golden sceptre may be held out in mercy.

But it is not a doubtful question whether we may find mercy, for our God is a God of Covenant. He condescends to make a formal agreement with us. He confirms it by an oath. It is a Covenant which cannot be broken, and not one word of it shall fail, although earth and heaven should pass away.

The Covenant was the very heart of the Jewish religion. One might well pause here and explain the beautiful significance of the Ark of the Covenant. The tables of the law within ; the mercy-seat over them (for mercy rests ever upon justice) ; the overshadowing wings of cherubim ; the manifestation of the Divine glory above, and the ever-recurring entrance of the High-Priest, with blood of sprinkling, that mercy might be made to prevail over law.

This Covenant has been steadily enlarged since those ancient days. It was confirmed of God in Christ. "The Lord said unto my Lord." When the Good Shepherd came to seek the lost, the eternal Father gave Him for His own the flock which He should ransom, and sware unto Him that not one of them should perish. It has been heralded by a thousand tongues. It has been graven, not, indeed, with a pen of iron, in the rock, but far more durably on the undying page of Holy Scripture. A priestly order has been perpetuated to admit individuals within its pale. The parties to it are God, of the one part, and man, of the other. The stipulations are plain and simple. God covenants pardon, grace, and life. Man covenants faith, homage, and obedience.

God does not wait for us to make the first advances. He is not an angry One to be soothed and conciliated before He will listen to any terms. Of His own accord He sends forth an ambassage of peace. The Covenant is borne ever in the forefront of His host. The true energy and sweetness of the Gospel message, could we but realize it, is in this, that

THE PARDON IS MADE OUT BEFORE WE ASK IT.

Now these baptized scholars of ours are already children of the Covenant. Almost as soon as they were born they were formally and individually admitted within it. They have enjoyed many privileges by reason of it. God never repents of His gifts and calling. He does not repudiate His contract because we delay to perform our own part of it. True, definite refusal, on our part, will effect His release and insure our destruction. But, so merciful is He, that even after long neglect and disobedience we may perform our vows, and the covenant, for His part, stands firm and unalterable.

Does my brother clergyman take it for granted that his young people understand this and believe it? Let him persuade some among them to open their minds freely, and he will find that it is just here that not a few are in most grievous error or doubt.

They *do not* understand that God is already reconciled to them, and that He has, at their baptism, solemnly bound Himself never to

withhold forgiveness when it should be rightly asked.

They *do not* understand that it is themselves who have need to be reconciled in will and affection to God; they verily think that God is angry, and that something must be done to appease His anger, and to soften His heart.

Yes; could you follow one of the more earnest of your class into his solitude, it is not impossible you might find him striving in an agony of tears, by his sheer misery to work on God's compassion.

We shall teach our children, then, that there was One and only One who could presume to reconcile God to sinners. His work was finished eighteen centuries ago, and needs no help from us. It is within, not outside this Covenant of mercy, that He carries on the work of reconciling each sinner to his God. We do not persuade God to consent to reconciliation and make a Covenant with us. He has done that already. Confirmation does, as it were, single out and sharply define and loudly emphasize our own part and duty. It says, in effect: "There are no new terms to be made. See

this bond, with its explicit obligations. Do you disown the act of those who once subscribed it for you? Do you decline the grace which inserted your name therein before your will could be consulted? Or do you here publicly, before witnesses, ratify it and confirm it, assenting to it as your act and deed, and binding yourself, of your own free-will, to comply with the conditions as there set forth?"

I have said heretofore that I cannot advise the Confirmation of very young children. As I weigh the terms of the question proposed by the Bishop, I am awed by the significance and weight of its almost every word. Confirmation ought, indeed, to be the first free act in a child's life; but it should be a free act.

One of my little scholars once assisted me to explain what was meant by a free act. He reminded me that when his father sold a house—his mother being a party to the deed—the magistrate sent the father out of the room, and asked the mother privately whether she understood what the deed was about, and whether she was signing it of her own free-will.

We cannot too strongly impress it upon the child that, if he answers, "I do," it must be of his free-will, with an intelligent knowledge of what he is doing, and not to please some one else.

The amplifications of the question before us are very suggestive. (1) We "renew a promise;" (2) we "ratify;" (3) we "confirm;" (4) we "acknowledge ourselves" bound.

Each of the terms has its appropriate use. We renew promises; we ratify treaties; we confirm covenants; we acknowledge debts and obligations. Even thus: 1. The baptized child has made *promises* to God of love and service, which he has kept very imperfectly, and which his better mind should prompt him to *renew*. 2. The Great King has made a *treaty* with his revolted subjects, and this treaty we have need to *ratify*. 3. The Creator has proffered a *covenant* to His creatures, and this we must cheerfully *confirm;* and 4. We owe the Merciful One a *debt* of gratitude, and this obligation we must gratefully *acknowledge*.

Let me be forgiven if I seem hypercritical.

If one of us were about to sign a deed, bind-

ing him for all his life to a payment or a service to his brother man, he would weigh well each individual word in which the obligation is set out. Let us put our candidates on their guard ; let us remind them, you are not about to promise some abstract thing or other, but *this particular something*, expressed in these definite words, Promise, and Treaty, and Covenant, and Debt : keep them all in view. Renew, and Ratify, and Confirm, and Acknowledge. Know what these words mean before you say, "I do."

There are considerations of place and witnesses not without their lesson.

"Do ye here ?" We are confirmed, ordinarily, in a holy place. We come deliberately, and with a set purpose, to God's house, in order to ratify God's Covenant. Its very stones hear the words spoken. If we slight the engagement there entered into, it may be "the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it."

"In the presence of God and of this congregation." The presence of the people enhances our responsibility. We cannot plead thought-

lessness or precipitancy where a promise has thus been made at the entering in of the gate. If I say to one and another, "Ho! such an one. Turn aside, sit down here . . . ten men of the elders of the city." If I say "unto the elders and unto all the people, ye are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's," the obligation incurred can never be disavowed.

God's presence is at last the one great thought which should fill the mind.

His calm gaze is upon us. He is reading our secret thoughts. He can bear with human infirmity; but He does not tolerate conscious insincerity. How dreadful a sin it is for one to say, "I do," when in his heart of hearts he does not intend to do!

The presence of God! What comfort in that thought for the little ones! Let us suggest it to our faithful children. Some may say, that child does not know what he is doing; but God sees that you do understand, and do mean that you will try to love Him with all your heart. Your dearest friends may be doubtful of you; they see so much that is

wrong in your life and temper. But this merciful God knows not only how much wrong you have done, but how hard you have tried to do right. This thought of the vow to be made, not to man, but to God, may well allay our apprehensions and encourage us, unworthy as we are, to resolve :

"AN OFFERING OF A FREE HEART WILL I GIVE THEE, AND PRAISE THY NAME, O LORD, BECAUSE IT IS SO COMFORTABLE."

CHAPTER X.

RENUNCIATION.

INASMUCH as Confirmation is the ratification of a covenant, there are promises to be renewed by both parties. Man binds himself anew ; Almighty God consents to repeat the assurances of His favor.

Man's part and God's part,—neither must be overlooked. But first in order comes the consideration of what we undertake when we are confirmed.

In the last article we considered the question addressed by the Bishop to the candidates. The brief but significant reply, "I DO," comes next in order.

By this answer the candidate assents, without reserve, to the interrogation of the Bishop. The answer, more largely written, comes to this :

I DO here, in the presence of God and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow made when I was baptized.

I DO ratify and confirm the same.

I DO acknowledge myself bound to believe and to do all the things which I then undertook.

We recur at once to what was undertaken when we were baptized. We come *now* to promise over again the identical things which we promised *then*. And so we turn back a leaf or two in the Prayer-Book, and examine heedfully the engagements of our Baptism.

These are three in number—Renunciation, Belief, and Obedience. We have to do first with Renunciation.

It is well known that this feature of the Baptismal Office is of very ancient origin. In the early Church, the candidate for holy Baptism added to his words very expressive gestures of defiance to the evil one. Bingham says: "The catechumens . . . were placed with their faces to the West, and then commanded to renounce Satan with some gesture or rite, expressing an indignation against him, as by stretching out their hands, or folding them, or striking them together; and sometimes by ex-

sufflation and spitting at him, as if he were present."

No man can serve two masters. The first step in assuming the yoke of Christ, is to renounce allegiance to those other lords who have usurped dominion over us. We may not worship the Lord and serve our own idols.

What is Renunciation? Let us not overstrain it, neither let us fall short of its meaning.

We should be careful to disabuse the minds of our candidates of an exaggeration into which conscientious people may fall; as if to renounce Satan were to profess that we had already trampled him under our feet, and had so gained control over our sinful inclinations, that we felt assured we should never again be betrayed into wickedness.

No; Renunciation is not Victory; it is rather a declaration of war. We do not renounce after the fight is won. We renounce before we fight at all. It is a sacrilege to draw sword for Christ without first of all disavowing all sympathy with his great enemy, and repudiating all allegiance to him. We may be con-

scious of a thousand infirmities; the shame of yesterday's fall may be fresh in our recollection; we may be diffident of our ability to meet the morrow's trial; and yet we may, with perfect sincerity, acknowledge where our duty lies, and flinging down the gauge of battle, cry, "O dark and malicious spirit, mighty, but not almighty, I renounce thee. I defy thee and all thy works. It shall be war between us; war even unto death. As I put on my armor, I make no boast; but this I protest,—I will never willingly yield to thee. Even if thou dost get the advantage over me, I will not submit. Although the battle seem to be lost, I will not surrender to thee. If I must needs die, I will die with God's banner over me, and on my lips a defiance for thee."

Some of the very best people I have ever had to deal with have had their great trouble just here. They would ask, how can I say, I renounce, when the evil which I would not is so often the thing I do? They could not divest themselves of the belief that Renunciation befitted veterans, rather than raw recruits. Oh, what tenderness, what sympathy, what patient

explanation, what large encouragement are needed to guide aright such anxious souls?

But, doubtless, most of those with whom we have to deal, need more to be guarded against a different error. I have sometimes encountered men who said plainly that they desired to be Confirmed, because that act would bring them under salutary influences, and they supposed that a vague purpose to amend their ways would be sufficient qualification.

Woe unto us and to the flock if we thus lower the standard of God's requirement! The Renunciation of the Bible and of the Prayer-Book is not a vague and well-meaning generality. It implies thoughtfulness and deliberation. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Choice implies a careful estimate of alternatives, and the exclusion of one for the sake of another. Renunciation must be absolute and unconditional. It must, so far as the law of the mind, the intent, the purpose, the higher will is concerned — it must protest against all unrighteousness, and abjure all that is displeasing to our Maker.

Nothing can exceed the kind allowance

made in God's dealings with us, for the failures in act and life, of men whose deliberate purpose is to worship no other God but the Lord. But we find no such allowance for the man of double mind who, in acccepting God's service, does not, in the depths of his purpose (however he may fall short in accomplishment), renounce all other service.

Compare, for instance, Peter's sin with that of Ananias and Sapphira. So far as the thing done is concerned, Peter's fault was the greater. The cowardice, the desertion, the falsehood, the intemperate oaths seem to us more dreadful than the single act of hypocrisy. Yet, how easily was Peter restored! in what gentle terms was his fault condoned! while the others were made a monument of stern justice and avenging wrath!

We are at no loss for an explanation. Peter's heart, before and after the fall, was strong to follow his Lord to prison and to death. He never, in his intention, prevaricated with his duty. His self-confidence did, indeed, betray him against his deliberate purpose; and when he went out and wept bitterly,

we have evidence that this purpose re-asserted itself so soon as he had time to think.

But not so with Ananias and Sapphira. They renounced the devil, and heard the Word gladly, and did many good things. But while they professed to renounce all, they purposely kept back something, and persisted in the dishonesty. And so they stand out on the earliest page of the Church's history as a warning against the peril of a renunciation which is not honest and without reserve.

It becomes us, then, to lay much stress upon this vow of renunciation. We are not likely ever to have so favorable an opportunity to impress on the child the necessity of giving all his heart to God. The very least that we can safely do is, while not undertaking to pass judgment upon the individual's sincerity of intention, to urge upon him the necessity of searching and trying his conscience, and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God. Encouragement and warning must be mingled. Encouragement to come, in spite of sins and infirmities; warnings to forbear, without a single purpose and a pure intention.

We must be at pains to amplify this topic, and to discuss the details covered by this vow. I doubt whether we can with profit attempt to define, sharply and precisely, the classification of sin suggested in the vow. The general statement is clear enough, that, besides selfishness and bad example, we have to deal with a secret foe—the leader of the fallen angels.

Moreover, without classifying all sins as to their origin, we may indicate, in general terms, the sins which come from one or another of these malign influences. Pride, Gluttony, and Covetousness, for instance, are eminently representative of the devil's work, the fleshly lust and the world's vanity, by which men are led astray.

Almost every sin is composite in its origin. The Devil suggests, the World promotes, the Flesh consents. But we are not all tempted alike.

In renouncing the devil and all his works, we specially renounce sins of the intellect. The devil is a spirit; he cannot, if he would, sin in the way of what men call vice. Men little realize that they can and do sin with the intellect; and yet the deadliest and most fiendish

sins are those of the intelligence. Men fancy that they are not responsible for what they think and believe; so far from it, nothing is more fatal in its consequences to others. No sin is more arrogant toward God than a false and wicked opinion.

The nature of our trial differs much. Some men are so constituted that to convince their judgment is to determine their action; while others, however open to conviction, and candid in their judgments, break down utterly when the judgment of the mind has need to embody itself in some act of duty. The wrestle of the drunkard with his thirst is not more agonizing than the throes of intellect in the case of one who has need to surrender a cherished opinion —a vicious habit of thought —at the command of God.

In renouncing the devil and all his works, we renounce especially the right to think our own thoughts, and to believe what we like. The thought is to be brought into captivity to Christ. We have no right to believe anything that is not true. We agree absolutely and without reserve, wherever God has spoken, to ac-

cept His declaration as final. We distinctly repudiate the right to adapt belief to inclination. Need I say what occasion there is to warn our people how diabolical are the sins of the intellect!

"The sinful lusts of the flesh" include a number of particulars which so readily suggest themselves that they need not be now enumerated. Just here we may well urge the great duty of self-denial. To refrain from excess and intemperance, does not fill out the measure of this vow. We must do more than that. We must, in a sense, crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts. The body must be kept under, and brought into subjection.

The necessity of imposing restraint upon ourselves in things lawful, is little recognized in the popular religion. Fasting and abstinence have no place in the most active systems of the day. Ridicule is heaped upon the observance of Lent, not by scoffing editors, but by the conductors of religious journals. Men who have no patience with drunkenness, see no sin in over-feeding. Every physician knows that religious people indulge their appetites, and,

seemingly, without any compunction of conscience, even when considerations of health demand abstinence.

Self-discipline is hard to maintain when we set about it late in life. Let us, in very charity, impress on those who are considering what it is to be a Christian, that besides refraining from vicious excess, every man should strive from the beginning to hold a tight rein upon his appetites, to use his liberty with moderation, to eat and drink to the glory of God.

CHAPTER XI.

WORLDLY CONFORMITY.

THE vow of Renunciation is so large and comprehensive that each of its three divisions may well form the subject of a Confirmation lecture. If we now select the Renunciation of the world's pomps and vanities from the rest for special consideration, it is not because these are more dangerous than the enticements of the devil or the lusts of the flesh. It has seemed, however, that what is known as "worldly conformity" is a topic difficult to handle discreetly with our catechumens; one is embarrassed in attempting to define its limits, so as to avoid the errors of asceticism and of laxity. Let us then suggest some of the principles which ought to underlie our teachings on this most practical question.

Cares and riches and pleasures, so our Lord teaches us, are the thorns which choke the word and render it unfruitful. It may be

doubted whether we appreciate the evil influence of care, as that word is used in Scripture. Many a man, who is neither covetous nor pleasure-loving, is dwarfed in his religious life by an habitual yielding to the anxieties of life. We may be worn in God's service, but we ought not to be care-worn. We need not be, if, while we feel the weight of our responsibilities, we are at pains also to realize the all-sufficiency of the promised grace. Let it be noted that anxious care is renounced as one of the world's vain, empty, useless things.

But it is conformity to the world in its parade and ostentation, its luxury and dissipation that most forces itself upon the thoughts of a pastor, as the temptation that specially threatens his young people. We all unite to deplore the seeming absence of self-restraint among the members of our communion, and their readiness, when they mingle with the world's gay crowd, to run with it into all manner of extravagance.

How are these evils to be remedied or even abated? Certainly, not by violent treatment.

How often have we known violent denunciation of pleasure-loving from the pulpit to do harm instead of good, the clergyman being almost defied. Neither will discipline avail. Courts and laws and penalties are for the suppression of crimes ; they reach only to offences which can be specified by statute and shaped into an indictment. They are powerless to make people good. The individual clergyman who attempts to enforce, *by authority*, his own views about the kinds and the degrees of indulgence which are permissible, is seen at once to exceed his powers.

And, if in despair of securing temperance, we urge entire abstinence, and pronounce all amusement and show and luxury to be sinful and dangerous, the extravagance of such teaching will defeat itself. We believe that experience shows those clergymen to have been most successful in resisting the influence of worldliness among their people who have relied chiefly upon two things—viz., the influence of faithful and affectionate advice to individuals in private, and the effort (corresponding to what the physicians call constitutional treatment)

to cultivate and promote a healthful spirituality of soul.

However, the worldliness of our people and the remedy for that evil are not now my theme. We have before us a more limited inquiry. What shall we say to those who are preparing for Confirmation about the pomps and vanities? Some very blunt questions may be addressed us. Thus: "What is the law of your Church about amusements?" "Does the Episcopal Church allow her members to dance?" So say people from outside; while some dear child of the Church, unwilling to grieve or disobey her own pastor, inquires whether *we*, *i. e.*, the individual clergyman, expect her to give up all the pleasures and amusements of social life.

Is it an evasion of responsibility to refuse a direct answer to questions like these? There was no evasion about our Lord, and yet He declined a direct answer to a question conceived in like narrowness. One asked: "Who is my neighbor?" The retort, for it is not a reply, at the close of His parable is: "Which now of these three, thinkest thou was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?"

The man inquired who those people were to whom he owed the debt of kindness. Our Lord, instead of answering him, tells him a story of one who never thought to ask such a question, but made himself neighbor to any and every sufferer within his reach.

And so all the questions we have suggested are conceived in error; as if the Christian life were an observance of rules and canons, or as if we clergy had our own notions and fancies to impose on others. We must deal with this subject in a far loftier way.

1. We may well begin by explaining what it is to be conformed to the world and the sin of such conformity.

The Church and the world are distinctly opposed in the Bible. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Their children have outwardly much in common. Both classes frequent the same paths, pursue the same avocations, and enjoy the same pleasures. Tares and wheat grow in the same field and very close together.

But while their life has so much in common, their mind and purpose differ widely. The

world's man looks not beyond the things temporal, while God's servant is ever striving so to use the things temporal that he may not lose the things eternal.

Now it is very possible to be conformed to the world in spirit, howbeit we refrain from what is censurable in action. "Be not conformed to this world," says St. Paul, "but be ye transformed"—*transfigured*—the word is the same that is used to denote the illustrious transfiguration of our Lord on the mount—"by the renewing of your mind."

Yes, we must renew our minds, and ever be seeking to renew them. We must be ever on our guard against doing worldly things in a worldly spirit. For it is very possible while our abstract faith in the vanity of earth and the certainty of judgment remains unchanged, to forget all this in the busy whirl, and to eat and drink, to trade and travel, to laugh and joke, as if God were but a name and the great account a fable.

It must be the purpose and high resolve of the Christian man, not to be seduced into this error of leaving his religion out of his common

walk and work. One act of renunciation will not suffice. It is his life-long work often repeated, to call a halt in his daily routine, to bethink himself and arraign himself, to examine his work and his play in the light of the Gospel, and to strive so to conduct them both that the Lord, should He come suddenly, would be pleased to find him so doing.

We must explain, then, that the opposite of worldly-mindedness is spiritual-mindedness It is vain to renounce the world unless we make up our minds to do all that is appointed to keep the conscience tender and the soul awake. I am far from affirming that the man of genuine spirituality does not need instruction as to the particulars of his duty, or can safely dispense with self-imposed rules to guide his behavior. But the point to be made is that in spite of these valuable aids, worldly conformity, in some shape or other, will get hold of us unless we continually cultivate a devout affection and walk in the spirit. St. Paul's illustration of the expulsive power of a spiritual temper almost startles one : "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." So long as

men feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things, that thirst which some find it so hard to resist in a careless moment, is scarce a temptation.

2. We must also remind our people that our holy religion is not one of minute and rigid rules. It seeks to teach us right principles. Its precepts are large and comprehensive, and are seldom carried out into elaborate detail.

For we must bethink ourselves that we are not slaves, with an inevitable tale of brick to make up ; neither is God a hard master solicitous for a mere result. If a uniform, mechanical obedience were what He values, the Bible would have been other than it is.

Far from this. He delights in the free-will offering. He demands of us a reasonable, that is, a rational, service,—the service of an intelligent and thoughtful being. Do we not sometimes avoid giving minute directions to our children, throwing them on their judgment? And are we not well content, however poor be the achievement, if it display thought, inven-

tion, and a heedful regard to our general directions?

Now we are God's children, in the way to be educated for heaven. Touching the great principles of right and wrong, His revelation is full and ample. We are at no loss to know what are the motives which should influence us; and more than this, He has set before us saintly examples worthy of our study, and in the person of our Lord a perfect example of an absolutely sinless life.

Thus are we thrown out, not into the open field, to die, but in the wide world, to make sure our calling and election. A technical obedience is impossible. There are numerous instances in which we cannot at once determine what He would have us to do. The vicissitudes of life, the changes of circumstances, the conflicts of duties unite to open before us a large field in which we have a noble opportunity to show ourselves scrupulous and sedulous to please.

Such is the glorious liberty of the children of God; liberty to serve not within the narrow limits of ordinance and prescription, but to the utmost bounds of a grateful heart.

What means the "well done" of the Judge, as He inspects the record of our lives? It is a blurred and blotted page, after all. But the gracious One looks at it as I might look at my good child's copy-book. Poor writing it is; but how hard he tried to please! Those uncouth characters, how, as his fingers traced them, did he keep his eye on the copy, and strive to reproduce it!

3. Let us remember yet again that our Lord has not left us comfortless; we have a Guide and a Teacher. For we live under a dispensation of the Spirit. The home of this Spirit is in the Church, and through her He teaches and guides the faithful.

But He dwells, besides, within each one of us. If we lack wisdom, and ask Him, He will tell us what to do and which way to go. Not that He will at all save us the necessity of inquiry and deliberation; but that He will, when we have done our part, enlighten our minds and purify our motives, and save us from deadly error. In any doubtful case the generally accepted opinion of the devout, the expressed judgment of our ecclesiastical superi-

ors, and the advice of the individual pastor who watches over us, are entitled to much weight. I confess I am at a loss to understand the mind of some very zealous Churchmen, who treat as mere rubbish any utterance of the House of Bishops which is not fortified by a penalty. Surely, by a loyal and humble Christian man, any counsel which the united Episcopate sees fit to give, ought to be received with profoundest respect. The Bishops of this Church have not failed to put on record their judgment concerning various amusements in which some of our people join without scruple.

4. But especially should we persuade our candidates to take this vow of renunciation out of the region of abstractions and generalities, and to consider what it means in the case of the individual who utters it.

"Take up *thy* cross," is the spoken word; not a cross of cloud and mist; not some one else's cross; but thine own cross of duty and of self-denial.

Great armies seldom engage all along the line. There is some one spot which is key to the position; some strategic point, at which the

battle is won or lost. Each candidate knows, or may know, what is that indulgence, replete with danger, which it most pains him to surrender. Does he mean to renounce *that*, and to take up the cross of a struggle, life-long, it may be, against it? Is there some custom or luxury familiar to the world, innocent in the case of many, perhaps, but fraught with danger to his peculiar temperament, or for special reasons inadmissible in his circumstances? And is he ready to include *that* in his renunciation?

Oh, how much does the after Christian life depend upon the fidelity of self-examination and the honesty of purpose with which one renews his vow of renunciation! We cannot, in such cases, "let them off," as the children say, with the surrender of this or that equivocal pleasure. We must persuade them to resolve that while they use freely and thankfully the good gifts of God, they will strive to recollect themselves, and ask, in every doubtful instance, what would my Lord have me to do.

5. And, lastly, having affirmed and impressed these great principles, we should not shrink from giving our advice and our opinion con-

cerning this or that indulgence or temptation. Each one has his own opinions; we must try to divest ourselves of prejudice, and of cowardice, too. We may not present our holy religion as other than it truly is; genial and cheerful, delighting in the merry laugh and happy games of children, bringing its benison to the festive gathering, with no more scowl on its face for human adornment than for the glories of the lily or the gay plumage of the birds.

But when liberty threatens to run into licentiousness, when pleasure becomes enervating by its excess, when the Christian proposes to go anywhither where he may not ask the Master to go with him, or seeks any enjoyment for which he may not render God thanks, we must, with no bated breath, declare that the end of these things is death.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

The candidate for Confirmation, as he renews his vow of renunciation, so, also, reaffirms his acceptance of the articles of the Christian Faith as contained in the Apostles' Creed. Surely, he ought to have a distinct idea of the meaning of each and every article in this brief and comprehensive formula. In explaining the Creed to our candidates, our difficulty consists in the very wealth of material at our disposal. The care of the minister is to simplify and adapt to the capacity of his pupils the able and exhaustive teachings of our great divines.

I shall confine myself in this chapter to some general considerations concerning the Creed, taken as a whole, which it seems important to urge in our day and country.

1. How simple is the faith which is necessary to salvation.

The distinction between Faith and Doctrine, so familiar to the theologian, is far from being understood by the many. It not unfrequently happens that one who has been awakened in his spiritual life, imagines that there is a task before him of appalling difficulty. He verily supposes that he must examine all the doctrines of our holy religion, and make up his mind clearly in relation to them before he can rightly make or renew his vows to God. And so, instead of bending all his strength to the one great issue, the surrender of himself to God, his energies are distracted in the vain effort to grapple with the many points of theology over which controversy is waged. It is pitiable to see a man who has need to prostrate himself at the feet of the Crucified, rather hovering around the Cross, and not venturing in the way of personal access, while he debates in his mind a multitude of questions, of deepest interest, no doubt, but having no necessary connection with our justification before God.

There is a Faith which one must hold to be a Christian at all; it embraces but few particulars.

Doctrine is that which contributes to our spiritual development and growth. It is so large and so various that no life-time has ever exhausted its study.

To put the case more precisely, we have found an anxious inquirer studying the Thirty-nine Articles, and doubtful about coming to Confirmation because he could not truthfully say that he accepted all the statements therein contained.

Now, we do not discourage such inquiry. The more light the better. But while we give all the explanation in our power, let us remind him that in Confirmation he is not to express his acceptance of the Doctrines of religion as contained in the Thirty-nine Articles. It is the Faith, not the Doctrine, which he avows; certain distinct articles which belong to what is known as "*the Faith*," and which are collected in a brief formula.

The distinction between Faith and Doctrine is evident in the Apostolic commission: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." There is "THE FAITH."

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Believeth what? Clearly the essential Faith of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And then our Lord adds: "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This teaching of doctrine and precept is supplemental; it is for the edifying and perfecting of such as by accepting the Faith have come into a state of salvation.

Let one look at the Creed and he will see that it readily divides itself into three parts. We profess our belief in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The links in the Creed are not so much doctrines as explanations, or, so to speak, identifications, of the sacred Person, whose Deity we acknowledge.

The Faith that saves is, according to St. Paul, a wondrously simple thing. He would dissuade us from the curious gaze into celestial mysteries; he would withdraw us from contemplating the deep secrets of the nether world. Such study is premature until pardon is assured. The word that saves is nigh us, in the heart and in the mouth. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and

believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." To confess the resurrection intelligently is, in effect, to confess the Father who restored, the Son who revived, and the Spirit who quickened.

We must not, then, let our candidates trouble themselves prematurely with doctrinal inquiry. It may well be the study of their life to grow in knowledge, and the pleasure of ours to teach them all we know. But when one is asking what must I do to be saved, God has put into our mouths a very brief reply. A long story is out of place for a dying man. We tell him, Believe and be saved. And after he is saved, and become one of a ransomed flock, we cease not our care, our labor and our diligence, until there be no place left either for error in doctrine or viciousness of life.

2. The Creed is not so much a summary of doctrines as a recitation of facts and events.

We can very well imagine that the Creed might have been cast in a different mould. It might have used such terms as justification, sanctification, propitiatory sacrifice, and the like. Such a Creed would have been little

suited to the capacity of the great multitude, who must always make up the Church,—a multitude little accustomed to abstract and technical terms. But facts are within the grasp of an ordinary intelligence.

Every day men are acting upon their belief in the telegraph as a fact, who can give no account of the working of the telegraph. The Creed does no more than require us to say that we believe in certain facts as true, in certain incidents in the world's history as having actually happened, in certain events in the future as so promised, that we may confidently expect them. It is a fact that God the Father made heaven and earth. It is true, in the same sense in which any history is true, that the Son of God became a man, and, after being put to death, rose again. There is a Holy Ghost. There is and long has been extant in the world a corporation known as the Church. Forgiveness of sins is in the Church offered and obtained. And, finally, I have abundant warrant to believe that the dead shall rise, and live forever after death.

Now this, and nothing more abstruse and

difficult is the necessary Faith of a Christian man. How these things can be, and why they came so to be, are questions which we need not solve in reconciling ourselves to God.

What a service we shall have done our candidates, if we thus accustom them to think of our holy religion as something embodied in fact and history! We know how it is in a criminal trial; one single fact, perhaps in itself of no great significance, is enough to make a juryman set aside the most plausible and ingenious argument with which that undisputed fact cannot be reconciled.

The enemies of the Faith are less and less disposed to meet the issue of fact. They attack the theory of religion and its mysteries. They seek to draw men into the region of speculation where the uncertain meaning of terms and the imperfections of logic render it easy to darken counsel. They would be glad to make of Christianity a philosophy or a code, and to ignore, so far as they can, its claim to a place in the great chain of events which links the present with the past. That name, "Pontius Pilate," is not without reason intro-

duced into the Creed. It brings the whole Creed within the range of accustomed historical investigation. However plausible may be the speculations of unbelief, they do not affect our Faith, until so much of history can be disproved as records how a Roman governor of that name adjudged to death One who called Himself the Son of God, and who, by rising from the dead on the day predicted by Himself, was declared and proven to be no deceiver, but the Son of God with power.

Let it be understood, then, by the candidate for Confirmation that he is to profess his belief, not in a series of abstract propositions, but in a "true story," a veritable history, too important to be neglected, and so proven that it is "worthy of all men to be received."

3. The Creed is a Catholic Creed, and differs widely in importance from definitions of doctrine which any one branch of the Church may set forth for the restraint of her teachers and for the guidance of her children.

Let us imagine that a Christian man who has been slumbering in the grave for fifteen hundred years, were to come back to life and move

among us. He asks to be received into our fellowship, and demands the conditions annexed by us to the enjoyment of Church privileges.

Should we require of him to subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles, or the Westminster Confession, or any such elaborate exposition of doctrine, methinks he would lift up his hands in deprecation, and declare that in his day the lay people were never subjected to any such theological examination.

Suppose one presents to him the creed of Pope Pius, or tells him that he must assent to purgatory, transubstantiation, the immaculate conception, and the infallibility, he would at once exclaim that no such doctrines were taught in his day.

But suppose—for we can afford to be very liberal just here—that he did not pronounce them false, or object to them as doctrines permitted to be taught, yet the Romanist himself must agree that he would unequivocally declare, "Nothing of all that was deemed to be *of the Faith* in my day. It never came into any man's mind to say to a catechumen, You must profess your belief in all these doctrines

in order to be admitted to the Holy Communion."

Well, then, suppose we say to this Nicene man, "I shall rehearse to you the Articles of our Faith, that you may know whether you do believe as a Christian man should or no. Dost thou believe in God the Father, Maker of Heaven and Earth?"—and the rest—would he not promptly answer, "That is just the belief, and the whole of the belief, into which I was baptized. In my day, the man who in those words professed himself a Christian, had the freedom of the Church throughout the whole world."

We may thus make our candidates understand that they are to profess the Faith once, and once for all, delivered to the saints. We thus enable them to see that all the new articles, even if not *false doctrines* as we aver, are, beyond all doubt, *false articles of faith.* They are, as a creed, novelties, which no one pretends to have been of obligation at Rome itself, until a little while ago.

The same consideration illustrates the liberality and comprehensiveness of our branch of

the Church. She has not set up a shibboleth of her own. She does not require of people to give in their adhesion to all her statements and definitions. No; she teaches, indeed, according to the wisdom given unto her, all that she has received. She declares the whole counsel of God, and keeps back nothing that is profitable. She even demands respect to her teachings, and acquiescence in her discipline. But the door of privilege stands as wide open as our Lord has left it. *The Faith*, not the Doctrine, is her requirement. The Faith of olden time, as expressed in the olden words, the Christian Faith, as contained in the Apostles' Creed.

4. Be it observed, yet again, Belief in the articles of the Christian Faith involves more than the assent of the mind to the truth of the facts.

We may know things without feeling them. I prefer to use this word, "feeling them," because it is better understood than a more theological phrase. We have authority for it, too. "The Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower . . . make thee *know and feel* that there is none other name under heaven ——."

We know and we believe a thousand things which do not stimulate our actions, which cause us no concern, and which, if they were other than they are, would in nowise change the course of our life. But some others we feel as well as know; we feel them as things with which we have to do. They mould our characters, they affect our plans, our hopes, our fears.

The third question of the Baptismal Office is, then, no surplusage.

The man says, "I do believe the articles of the Christian Faith."

Well, then, "Wilt thou *be baptized* in this Faith?"

Do you identify yourself with it, commit yourself to it, venturing your happiness and safety in life, in death, and after death, upon its certainty? Even thus the children of Israel believed in Moses. They might have believed in him and yet never have forsaken the land of Egypt. But "they were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." They *so* believed that they committed themselves absolutely to his guidance, and were content to

place the irrevocable barrier of that baptism in the sea, between the future and the past.

The Creed must have its place in the affections as well as in the understanding. We must believe it, as the mariner trusts his compass—steering our course by it in darkness and in storm. We must believe it affectionately and confidingly, as a child believes that one is his mother.

I have been quoting once or twice from the Office for the Visitation of the Sick. It deserves to be remembered that the Apostles' Creed meets us at our entrance into the Christian life ; it is interwoven into the devotions of every day ; it is cast into interrogative forms, and propounded anew when we are about to pass into the spirit world. Oh, how dear is the thought that in the extremity of human weakness, when we gather up our powers for the last struggle, nothing harder will be required of us than to renew the profession of the faith of childhood, and that in the simple, artless words, familiar to the lips and dear to the hearts of all Christian people, in all ages and in all countries !

CHAPTER XIII.

OBEDIENCE.

"WILT thou then obediently keep God's Commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?"

A searching question this, and well supplementing those which have preceded it. The candidate for Confirmation is reminded that to the avoidance of palpable wickedness, and the profession of a true faith, he must add the service of a positive Obedience.

St. Paul speaks of "the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the *obedience of faith.*" What is our faith worth unless it leads to the Obedience of faith? How plainly is it written in all the accounts of the final judgment, that inquiry will be made touching our Obedience or Disobedience, and that thus only it will be determined whether we were men of faith!

Obedience is the child of faith ; we cannot begin to confide in our Father's love and wisdom, without beginning also to walk in the way of His appointment.

Obedience is the promoter of faith. It is like the armature to the magnet, preserving and increasing the power that upholds it. It is the property of obedience to react upon the faith which prompted it, and to render it capable of a higher obedience.

Obedience is the enlightener of faith, and resolves all manner of hard questions. Often, when the reason of a commandment is not apparent, and when we are at a loss how to perform it, just so soon as we strive to obey, the mystery clears up behind us, and the way opens before us.

Obedience is the rewarder of faith. There is no revelation without a precept, and no precept without a promise. If we are content to stop short at faith in the revelation, and go not on to Obedience to the precept, we can never know the sweetness of the promise.

But I am not to discourse about the excellence of Obedience in general, but rather to

suggest some thoughts concerning it to one about to renew the very solemn promise quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

Obedience is very much a matter of habit. I do not mean that it can ever be rendered as a matter of course, without struggle and self-conquest; but this only, that it becomes easier where we cultivate the habit of doing what God tells us because He tells us, instead of the bad habit of pausing to inquire why He wills it.

We see this continually illustrated in the domestic circle. The habit of Obedience becomes almost an instinct with some children. They heed what is commanded them with ease and alacrity. A friend tells me that she overheard a five-year old girl giving some grave advice to a little boy of three, who had just gotten himself into trouble. After quoting the fifth Commandment she exhorted him to "run to his mother quickly when she called him, and not to ask her please not to make him." These little ones sum up grave duties in very simple formulas. This vow of Obedience may well be rendered as a promise that when the Heavenly

Father calls, we will run in the way of His Commandment, and that when His will is clearly indicated, we will, instead of seeking to change that will, study to conform our own to it.

Disobedience also is a matter of habit. How easy to content ourselves with a half-compliance, and to fortify ourselves with an excuse. How much like a naughty and frightened child is Saul with his labored explanation to Samuel!

How necessary is it that our purpose of Obedience should be honest and sincere, and that when God speaks, we should listen without bethinking ourselves of the liberty taken by others, or of the infirmities which might be plead in excuse by ourselves.

There is a sad lamentation in the breasts of many of us over our lack of religious comfort. Joy is among the fruits of the spirit, and yet we have little joy in God. We deplore the absence of it not merely because it mars our comfort, but because it impedes our usefulness. Many a good word would be spoken, many a downright blow be stricken, were it not for the

sad, heavy heart, which seems to feel that it has no right, while its own hearth is cold, to kindle the zeal of others.

What can be the matter with me? says one and another; and the answer is often returned, that it is all owing—and who can deny the truth of the explanation?—to lack of faith. One is told, if you can only see with a realizing faith, God and heaven, pardon and blessing, your sorrows will all flee away. And so, at certain seasons of the year, in many portions of our country, thousands of people are seeking, by means of animating religious exercises, to rise above their cheerless level, and to stir the sluggish emotions of joy and gratitude.

The phrase, "getting happy," has acquired a specific meaning, especially in the South. Even as I write there comes to my ear the sound of many voices, not unmelodious either, from a congregation of colored people. They sing a weird song, the men leading the strain, and the shrill voices of women coming in as a chorus. The rhythm is marked by the stamping of feet upon the floor. Such is their worship, kept up until midnight several times a week. It is a

specimen, only somewhat coarser, of thousands and thousands of services everywhere. The effort is "to become happy," and the means thereto is by hymns and shouts and bodily exercise to work one's self into a transport.

A little reflection might make one doubt the sufficiency of that system and of that treatment which would thus cure the sadness of a Christian soul.

Let us return to the illustration of a domestic circle; for we are but children, after all, and the family is a likeness in miniature of the Church. Saw we ever a docile and obedient child who was not happy? And saw we ever a child unhappy at home who was not, to some degree, in revolt against authority?

There can be no doubt that our lack of joy and peace in believing is due to a deficiency in our purpose of obedience. We have not made up our minds to do *all* that God has spoken. We fight feebly against a lust, but are not determined to mortify it and crucify it. We lay aside many a weight, but still forbear to surrender forever the besetting sin. The mote in the eye, the pebble in the shoe, the fly in the

ointment, is that some one thing in which we are not persuaded to be submissive. We need more faith indeed. We may well endeavor to inflame our hearts with devotion, until, by faith, we discern God, and all His goodness. But the faith must be such as will strengthen us, in the view of all this goodness, to say, without reserve, "the will of the Lord be done."

The harp of some sweet singer may exorcise for a while the demon of sadness, but the dark cloud will gather anew when the strain is ended. There is a surer way to peace and gladness,—a hard and thorny way, indeed, but one of God's own appointment. It is to be honest with ourselves; to lay the finger upon that thing, whatever it be, which is drawing the heart away from God, and to resolve, by His grace assisting us, that it shall no longer be a snare to us.

Oh, the sweetness of that peace which follows upon a genuine, child-like submission! How often does that peace which ever eluded us, when we sought her for her own sake, come to us unbidden after painful self-conquest, and

minister to us as the angels ministered in Gethsemane!

Such, then, is the lesson we may well impress upon our candidates in connection with the vow of Obedience. Their religious comfort must depend upon the integrity of their purpose in the matter of Obedience. We may well entreat each one to ask himself, "To what does this vow bind me individually?" We must warn him that he cannot honestly say, "I do," unless, besides doing many things, he really proposes to submit in those particular instances wherein Obedience is the sorest trial.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BLESSING OF GOD ALMIGHTY.

We are happy to have reached, in the course of these teachings, the point where we may speak of privilege instead of duty.

We have dwelt at some length upon the sinner's part in the covenant of grace, with its acts of renunciation and its vows of submission. We are now to speak of something which makes easy a yoke which otherwise were intolerable. We are to urge the inspiring thought, so full of cheer and comfort, that in Confirmation the gracious Father gives more than He receives; that in this covenant, deliberately and publicly renewed, while we bind ourselves to God, God binds Himself to us. Just so surely as we must meet this, our covenant, at the judgment bar, so will Almighty God, in the great assize, with unswerving truthfulness abide by the promises of mercy He has given us.

We shall speak first of *Benediction.*

The bowed head and the bended knee intimate filial submission on the one part; but the hands imposed and the words accompanying, express on the other part a Father's benediction upon a helpless child.

Without entering any further into the gifts of Confirmation, let us try to realize what it is for one to be blessed in the name of the Lord, his God.

We all know the value of Blessing. In this world of sad partings, if we have need to tear ourselves for a long season from parent, or wife, or child, when our hands have grasped each other, and our lips have met, and words seem too poor to express the regret and the longing, "God bless you!" bursts forth at last, being, as it were, the utterance of that priesthood of love wherein all loving souls have an anointing. And so, also, when we have tarried for a few days with some stranger, in whom we have found a kindred soul, and separate, sorrowing much that, in this world, we may hope to see his face no more, the Benediction of peace rises spontaneously to the lips.

The Benediction rises in value with the dig-

nity of him who blesses, and the solemnity of his blessing. The instinct which, as the old-time people tell us, led so many to bring their babes to La Fayette, when he revisited America, was the same instinct, although less hallowed, which caused the mothers to bring their little ones to our Lord, "that he might touch them."

I have known a soldier, a man not twenty-two years of age– a youthful David to look upon—who was told, most unexpectedly, that his injury was fatal, and that before sunset he must die. He took a moment only to rally from the shock of the communication, and then called for his little babe. The slight youth seemed to rise to the dignity of an aged patriarch as he laid his hands on the head of his baby-boy, and blessed him in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Yea, and he shall be blessed! Our hearts forbid us to think that this was not a more precious legacy to the little one than aught else the dying father had to bequeath.

Mere sentiment this, one may say. Science analyzes all sorts of things nowadays, and there is no natural virtue in a Blessing. Or some

Christian brother of ours may tell us that the days of secret marvels are over. We open all mysteries now. There is nothing in the Lord's Supper, even, beyond the acts done, and the words spoken, and the emotions aroused. A Blessing is a mere expression of good-will; worth that much, and no more.

But how is it with Cursing? Is that only so much breath moulded into voice, passing into the ear and beyond it, without significance save for the momentary resentment it engenders? A bitter Curse, though others hear it not, does it leave no scar, does it involve no humiliation? And if it come from a worthy man in the presence of the worthy, does it carry with it no lasting degradation? Do not the children of wrath seek to erase it with the very life-blood?

If a Curse cannot be forgotten, none the less should a Blessing of like authority deserve to be remembered. And if in the recollection of the one the soul frets and aches and feels itself degraded, surely the thought of loving Benediction should bring peace and comfort and the sense of honor rendered and of love attested.

Alas! we heed injuries far more than benefits. How many there are who count the Blessing of Peace a mere form, without present value or abiding consequences; while one syllable of contumely would rouse in an instant the fiercest passions of their nature!

Let one only consider how much is made of Blessing in the Bible, and he must see that this is a worthy element in Confirmation.

The time would fail me to tell how patriarchs and kings in the olden days were wont to bless. How much value was set upon the Paternal Benediction, even after the birthright was lost, one may see in the mournful case of Esau. Melchisedek, the mysterious high-priest, blessed Abraham. St. Paul reminds us here, "without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better." Ebal and Gerizim were appointed for Cursing and for Blessing, and the formula of Imprecation and of Benediction were alike prescribed by Divine wisdom. Blessing and Cursing pervade the Psalms and the prophets; nor were they unrealities. Balak did not err when he said, "I wot that he whom thou

blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed."

But we may well look more carefully at the place which Benediction occupies in the New Testament. It is the exordium of the Sermon on the Mount. Blessings and woes inaugurate the wonderful discourse. And if any supposes that there is here nothing deeper than the mere phrase of commendation and reproval, let him in his thought reach forward to the day of doom, and consider how Blessing and woe are then to be renewed and made effective. "Come ye BLESSED: Depart ye CURSED." With words such as these, the destiny of mortals shall be determined.

If one leaves out of mind the after-joys of heaven, and the long eternity of punishment; if he can fasten his thought upon that instant, when he shall be called forth by name, and stand to hear the verdict, he can but say to his heart, Oh, the unutterable joy and recompense of that one moment when the Lord shall bless me in the presence of high heaven; and the horror of that one moment if indeed the scathing breath of Omnipotence shall blight me, and

the Lamb in His wrath shall curse me to my face !

Just here one may ask whether besides the Blessings pronounced in general terms upon the poor, the mourners, and the like, we find instances in our Lord's personal ministry of Benediction to individuals. Words of loving salutation, and words of special absolution, occur not unfrequently. But the Priestly Benediction He used more sparingly. Once it was won by Peter's distinct confession · "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." Once again we read of little children "that He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." And, lastly, on the Ascension Day, "He led His apostles out" as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. "And it came to pass while He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into Heaven."

Thus it would seem that our Lord reserved His own formal and personal Benediction as a Reward for the confession of a true faith, as a Testimony to the worth of little children, as a

Comfort and Assurance to His faithful ministers. But now that He is ascended, the treasuries of Heaven are unlocked, and grace and blessings abound and superabound.

"The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel." If Benediction be thus a priestly function in the line of Aaron, much more does it appertain to those whom the Saviour hath sent in the plenitude of His power. His peace, invoked as He has commanded, come upon the worthy, and returns from the house that is not worthy.

Let us now turn to the Confirmation Office itself:

"Then all of them in order kneeling before the Bishop, he shall lay his hands upon the head of every one severally." The meaning of this imposition of hands severally, appears from the subsequent collect: "We make our humble supplications unto Thee for these Thy servants, upon whom, after the example of Thy holy Apostles, we have now laid our hands *to certify them by this sign of Thy favor and gracious goodness toward them.*"

Yes, Confirmation must be viewed in the light of Benediction. It is a solemn assurance and certificate given of God, through an authorized agent, of favor and gracious purpose. I think we should be at great pains to impress upon our candidates this comfortable view of Confirmation.

Suppose the candidate had lived in our Saviour's days, a member of the Jewish Church, but sore let and hindered in running his race, and had been privileged to listen to the voice of the Teacher Himself. Would not his heart have yearned for a personal approach? When he accepted tremblingly, the invitation to the weary and heavy-laden, when in response to the demand for faith, with a mighty effort and no small self-distrust he cried out, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief—" would it not have been a comfort and an encouragement to have felt upon his head the loving hand, and to have heard some loving word of Benediction, such as, "I certify thee by this sign of My favor and gracious goodness toward thee?"

Now this is Confirmation, in one of its as-

pects, God draws near to bless us. Accepting the heart's desire, He anticipates the reward of faithful service. He ministers in the present a foretaste of the mercy in reserve. He says to us in effect, "Fear not, little flock; it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Let our candidate prepare himself as best he can. But as he kneels down to renew his answer of a good conscience, let him forget, as it were, himself and his unworthiness. Let the human instrument fade out of view. Let there be present to the eye of faith, the High Priest, better than he of whom Abraham was blessed. Let him recognize as laid upon his head, the hands, the pierced hands, the hands last seen of men outspread in Benediction. Let him know the voice which, if he faint not, shall one day pronounce to him that crowning Benediction, enough of itself to make recompense for life's utmost sorrows.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

If it be asked of us to give in very few words the truest and most characteristic definition of Confirmation, we must needs answer: "It is the imposition of hands by the Bishop to convey to baptized persons the gift of the Holy Ghost."

We have seen that it has other uses. It serves the purpose of professing a good profession before many witnesses. So valuable is it in this respect, that if it be disused, something must be invented to take its place. The call for mourners to come to the anxious seat is man's substitute for a Divine ordinance. But its true significance is not apparent until we recognize it as the service in which we specially acknowledge the office of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and invoke His gracious help.

The Confirmation at Samaria followed hard

upon the baptism of the converts by Philip the deacon ; the Confirmation administered by St. Paul, at Ephesus, to those whom he had commanded to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, was doubtless in the same hour with the Baptism. In neither case, although a new profession was not needed, was the laying on of hands superfluous. "Then laid they their hands upon them, and *they received the Holy Ghost.*"

Such was Peter and John's errand to the Samaritan converts. "They prayed for them that *they might receive the Holy Ghost ;* for as yet He was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

We must not infer from this that there was no operation of the Holy Ghost in their baptism. We learn elsewhere that it is the Holy Ghost who regenerates in this holy sacrament. But it was in Confirmation that they received, not a new life indeed, but a gift of grace to develope and energize the new-born life.

It often happens, nowadays, that one is baptized after the Second Lesson, and presently

Confirmed in the course of the same service. That which is occasional with us, seems to have been the prevailing custom in early days. The imposition of hands followed immediately upon baptism, and was deemed a supplement to that sacrament.

It may be asked, How came the two to be separated ?

Probably the separation began when the Church commenced to enlarge her sphere of action. So long as a diocese embraced but a single city, or a few square miles of densely populated territory, baptism was administered under the immediate direction of the Bishop, and hands were at once imposed by him. As dioceses enlarged, this was no longer possible. Peter and John could not go down to Samaria on every occasion of Baptism. If the Ethiopian eunuch was ever confirmed, it must have been long after his baptism.

The Greek Church adheres to the early custom ; but then she must needs dispense with the Bishop. The priest confirms, using chrism which has received the episcopal benediction. Thus is the administration practically

taken away from the Apostolic order, and thus Confirmation loses one very lovely feature, for it is no longer, by bringing each individual directly to the Bishop, and procuring for him the benediction of the chief minister, a token of our oneness in the great family of God.

It seems, then, that the whole Church, by common consent (except where priests are permitted to Confirm), has agreed to defer Confirmation, instead of making it a part of the Baptismal office. We may be very sure that she has rightly used a discretion which belongs to her in the absence of any Divine prescription. We do not read in Scripture of any households being confirmed. Confirmation is nowhere made equal with the Sacraments, which are necessary to salvation. The case of the Ethiopian shows that one may go on his way rejoicing without it, if the proper officer be not at hand.

And, surely, now that the Church, by general consent, withholds Confirmation and the Holy Communion from infants, we can recognize the wisdom of that action. It seems consonant with the true intent of these holy rites, that

they should not be administered to those who "have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost;" who cannot "examine themselves, and so eat of that bread;" who cannot "discern the Lord's body." It seems most reasonable that the "strong meat" should be reserved for "them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Now, for the very reason that Confirmation, as administered in our day, is so suitable and beautiful a means of professing Christ before men, we seem to be in danger of laying too little stress upon the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the characteristic of the rite. We cannot impress too earnestly upon our candidates the lesson, that they are coming to ask and to receive a gift more valuable than the miraculous gifts which so often attended the imposition of Apostolic hands.

The Church child has been taught from the beginning that he is not able to "walk in the Commandments of God, and to serve Him, without His *special* grace." Besides the gra-

cious provisions made for a world of sinners, each of us needs, day by day, a special and personal gift, which he "must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer."

No lesson is easier to learn than this, but none more difficult to carry out in the life. Each little child who comes to us has a religious history marked by failures and self-reproach. He has his story, much like our own, of good resolutions made vehemently and quickly broken; of relapses into the sins of which he was most ashamed; of ineffectual strivings after the virtues he most coveted. He has been continually forgetting his need of special grace in each holy endeavor, or else negligent in calling for it by diligent prayer.

The Church, with unwearied patience, renews this lesson day by day. She varies the phrase of it with wonderful ingenuity in her Collects: "Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh, that Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service."

"O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee."

"In particular, we implore Thy grace and protection for the ensuing day."

Each reader, doubtless, has his favorite Collect; and oftenest its charm lies in this, that it expresses so tersely and devoutly that utter helplessness of man, that dependence of the human spirit upon the Divine Spirit, which we know so well and realize so little.

Now, Confirmation seems to be a formal and most solemn protestation of this familiar truth.

The children of the covenant are gathered around the chancel, and the Lord's Table is prepared, almost ready for their approach.

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" the Church seems to say. Children of faith and of privilege, have you sought and found that special grace, that wonderful provision of God's mercy for making you personally holy?

The children are about to promise and vow a new life. The Church fears lest they may not remember how weak are all mere human resolves, and lest they may forget how strong we are when we vow in the strength of the Holy One. So soon as the vow "I do" is

spoken, she hastens to cry, "Our help is in the name of the Lord."

It is a warning to each several soul, not to presume upon the integrity of his purpose or the strength of his will. And the response, "Who hath made heaven and earth," is a recognition of the almightiness of Him in whose strength we confide. The whole of the subsequent service expands and enforces the same fundamental truth, that there is a Holy Ghost, the Author and Giver of all spiritual life and strength. At the very outset of our voluntary service we surrender all self-confidence, and as we look to the Second Person of the Trinity for pardon and redemption, so we look to the Third Person of the Trinity for all the ability to make sure the calling and election of our baptism.

Of all that we are to teach our candidates this is the most important lesson. I do not mean the mere explanation of the doctrine, but the enforcing of it upon the heart and the conscience. The baptism in the Red Sea delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, but the long journey still remained. The

dough bound up in the kneading-troughs may well stand for the strength of one's newly-awakened purpose. It is no provision for a forty-years' journey. Day by day manna must fall, and day by day manna must be gathered. The grace of baptism or the grace given in some hour of hearty repentance does not take the place of that *special* grace needed for each day's sorrow and each day's temptations, which must each day, and often in the day, be called for by diligent prayer.

How shall we teach these things? There is but one way to teach them effectively,—we must draw upon the lessons of our personal experience. Let us remember our own strivings and our own failures. Let us recall the invariable result, the inevitable failure, whenever we attempted self-reformation without calling upon the Holy Ghost to help us; let us remember, too, how we have been strengthened and sustained when in utter weakness we cast our burden upon Him.

Nothing, more than the recollection of our own self-confidence and its consequences, will move our sympathy for young soldiers buck-

ling on their armor, and lead us to urge upon them the truth that it is the Creator Spirit alone who enables us to think and to do the right.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST FOR STRENGTH AND ILLUMINATION.

THERE has been, it is to be feared, in the preparation of candidates for Confirmation, some timidity of statement touching the gift therein conferred. We are almost afraid to say in distinct terms, "The Bishop will lay his hands upon you, that you may receive the Holy Ghost."

It is curious to observe how much more faith men have in their own inventions than in God's holy ordinances.

In revival seasons, the burden of the exhortation is to come up to the altar. Men say in the most unequivocal terms, "This the place *to get religion;* I promise you that if you will come hither and seek the Lord, your sins shall be forgiven, and you shall find joy and peace in believing;" and this, too, to people in the main thoughtless and unconcerned.

One can but marvel that men claim, and that without any suspicion of formalism, these wondrous gifts of pardon and illumination for the mourners' bench, while they lift up their hands in horror at the thought of grace actually exhibited and conferred in the ordinances of the Church.

Let us begin, then, by impressing on the minds of our children our need of the Holy Ghost, and the promise of the Father to bestow that gift. One can imagine nothing more explicit and more re-assuring than our Lord's blessed words.

Evil as we are and selfish, the cry of a hungry child touches the inmost soul of a parent. Without bread the child must die; without the Holy Ghost a more fearful death ensues, and the great Father-God, from whose unfathomable compassion we have derived that paternal instinct which makes us so loving to our helpless little ones, shall He refuse anything which our spiritual necessities demand? No; we are assured in living and loving words, "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your

Father which is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

In the faith of this assurance we ask daily, and grace is ministered for our daily need. And in this same assurance we come to Confirmation for an abiding, a life-long gift. It is the ordinance instituted for the bestowal of the Holy Ghost, and we have reached that period of the Christian life at which we need His special grace. God's children, heretofore, we are to put on manly armor now. It is time to put away childish things and take to us the panoply of God. Brief as the service is, we find that influence of the Holy Ghost which we seek in this ordinance, described under a variety of terms.

1. It is described, in the first place, as *Strength.* To confirm is to strengthen. We ratify and confirm our baptismal vow. We strengthen it, in a sense, by a new acknowledgment of obligation. But it were a great mistake to confine the Confirmation to our own part in the transaction. We confirm our vows, and God confirms or strengthens us in our good desires. "*Strengthen them*, we beseech thee, O

Lord, with the Holy Ghost, the Comforter." That is the very first petition when the Bishop lifts up the voice of prayer.

Let us emphasize this statement. Let us persuade our children to connect with the word Confirmation, first and chiefly, the thought that it means the strengthening in them by the Holy Ghost, of all holy purposes and good resolutions.

There is inexpressible comfort in this thought. When we awake to a conscious religious life, the sense of spiritual infirmity distresses and disheartens us. To will is present with us, but how to perform we find not. In our better moments we readily accept the cross of daily duty and self-denial. But we become easily wearied in well-doing. There is present with us a debility of the will which causes it to relax and yield just at the critical moment. We go to our task in the early morn with alacrity and determination, but before noon the enthusiasm dies out, and night finds us with the work undone. Such is the frailty of our nature that we cannot always stand upright, and "Undertake for me, O my God," is the prayer that befits

the veteran as well as the novice. Good-will is one thing ; strength to perform is quite another.

I think it may well encourage young people to remind them that this sense of spiritual weakness is present with the old as with the young, with the Bishop who blesses, as with the child who seeks the blessing.

A touching illustration of this is found in the office for the Consecration of Bishops. The Bishop-elect is examined in certain articles, how he is "minded" to behave himself in the Church of God. He answers again and again that he is "persuaded" or "determined" or "ready," and even that he "will so do, by the help of God." And then the presiding Bishop stands up and says: "Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who hath given you *a good will* to do all these things, grant also unto you *strength and power* to fulfill the same!"

Thus may the young child reason: "I too am 'minded,' 'persuaded,' 'ready,' even 'determined' to be a good soldier; thus much God hath done for my soul; and now I come to Confirmation, not because I am strong, but because I need strength." And let him not

doubt that, coming thus, he shall receive the Holy Ghost to invigorate his determination and to enable him in the performance of every duty.

2. To the prayer for strength succeeds the prayer for *Illumination.* For thus we may sum up the petition in which are enumerated the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit.

These are not now to be imparted for the first time ; the child has all along received a measure of them ; but now the Bishop prays "daily increase in them Thy manifold gifts of grace."

And the gifts enumerated, "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godlinesss," and lastly, "the spirit of Thy holy fear," are such chiefly as illuminate the soul, banishing the darkness of ignorance and unbelief.

The last of the seven—the fear of the Lord —is the beginning of all wisdom.

It deserves to be noted that while we pray for increase in all the gifts, touching this seventh and last the petition is, "*Fill them*, O Lord, with the spirit of Thy holy fear, now and forever." For this is the grace wherein

straitness is least tolerable. Weak, erring, and ignorant though we may be, the fear of God—not a slavish dread of His justice, but an awful reverence of His greatness and goodness—should pervade every portion of our being. So, then, in Confirmation the Holy Ghost comes to enlighten as well as to strengthen.

It needs but little experience in the religious life to discover how possible it is to know all that man can teach us, and yet to have no spiritual discernment.

Thus, if there be a prejudice in the mind which has gotten the mastery over it, an angel from Heaven cannot disabuse us of it until, by an influence within, we are made willing to receive the truth in the love of it.

Our Lord's preaching was to some a savor of death. Their eyes were blinded, and their hearts were hardened. They saw nothing, they understood nothing aright. But lay aside the instance of those who were maliciously wicked, and distinctly hostile to the truth: take the case of the more favored ones, and see how a man may stand in a very blaze of light, and yet see nothing. Our Lord works a stupen-

dous miracle—the multiplication of the loaves and fishes—and yet the very men whom He had fed, the very men who followed Him across the sea, hoping to be fed again, did not recognize any marvel. They ask Him for proof; they disparage Him by a comparison with Moses. "What sign showest thou that we may see and believe Thee? What dost Thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the wilderness."

To one unfamiliar with the plague of his heart, this story seems almost incredible. How could people see this marvel with their own eyes, and the very next day ask for a miracle?

But presently another incident is far more surprising. We may safely defy any one to find words more explicit than those in which our blessed Lord foretold to His Apostles His sufferings and death. And yet it was as if He had used an unknown tongue. It was all meaningless to them until from the opened sepulchre a ray of Divine illumination penetrated into the heart of St. John, and then, at last, "he saw and believed."

This blindness, because the eye which should

be single, is darkened by prejudice or passion, is not confined to matters of religion alone. Men will not see against their will. What amount of argument and remonstrance, for instance, will persuade a drinking man, or a spendthrift, that he is almost beyond his depth, and must retreat or be lost? Many have undertaken the ungrateful task of telling a man what every one knew save himself, and has been answered with a laugh, or a stare of hopeless incredulity.

We need not fear to encourage our candidates to believe that if they come aright, this gift of Illumination will be bestowed on them. As they read and hear Holy Scripture, the Spirit will open their hearts to attend to it, to discern its import and sweetness, to accept it and assimilate it. The Apostles, in one sense, were confirmed on the day of Pentecost. How much did they now remember, which they had seen but not heeded! What new meaning, they now found, in what they had known superficially! What new life was infused into beliefs held coldly and negligently!

And even thus, when a devout child receives

the Holy Ghost in Confirmation, we may well believe that he will now begin to discern, as he never discerned before, the import of his childhood's prayers, those

> "Cries of babes who cannot know
> Half the deep thoughts they breathe."

We may feel sure that a clearer light will fall upon familiar truths and early lessons, and formulas, hitherto recited mechanically; that psalms and hymns, pleasant to the ear, he knew not why, will now be understood, and will make new music to his ear. Keble well represents this process as progressive during all our childhood:

> "Dim or unheard the words may fall,
> And yet the heaven-taught mind
> May learn the sacred air, and all
> The harmony unwind."

We little realize how day by day the Holy Ghost is revealing himself to the child Samuel. But I think our experience teaches us, that in case of children rightly trained and brought to Confirmation, there is a brighter Illumination

of the understanding, a marked quickening of religious sensibilities, an invigoration of the sense of heavenly beauty.

Let us bethink ourselves, too, that it is the Holy Ghost who imparts practical wisdom, and enlightens us to decide rightly in difficult cases. The Collect for Whitsunday teaches us to ask, "Grant that by the same spirit we may have a right judgment in all things." St. Barnabas' day suggests a truth of which observant men cannot be ignorant, that one may not be "destitute of manifold gifts," and may yet lack the "grace to use them alway" to the honor and glory of God. The thought pervades the Holy Scriptures and the Prayer-Book, that our understanding needs to be sanctified, and that the Holy Ghost is ready to help us in forming our judgments.

To determine our duty is often harder than to perform it when determined. An error of judgment is frequently attended by consequences as mournful as if there was a malicious intention. Which of us but is conscious of lamentable mistakes in matters wherein he cannot accuse himself of any purpose to do

wrong? It is not enough that we endeavor to act considerately and religiously in some doubtful matter, to consult the lawyer, the physician, the friend, or the expert who may assist us in deliberation. We should more than this spread the matter before God, and pray that the Comforter may guide our judgment.

Some physicians there are, who not only ask God's blessing upon the remedies they prescribe, but are simple-hearted enough to send up a silent prayer for wisdom before they determine upon the treatment. Surely, we have abundant warrant thus to ask wisdom whenever we seem to lack it. Let one recollect what hard things are said in the Bible of folly, how fools and sinners are classed together, how often in the Psalms recur such prayers as "teach me Thy statutes," "grant me understanding," and it will plainly appear that our only security against mistake, in particular instances, is to ask Ghostly direction.

When a Missionary Bishop is to be elected, the House of Bishops betakes itself first to very earnest and solemn devotions. The "Veni Creator Spiritus" is said in distinct connection

with the choice about to be made. This is indeed a great matter, affecting the salvation of many. But are the anxieties of our individual life too small to authorize a like special invocation? Surely the Comforter is too condescending to refuse His aid. Why should we fear, whenever we are at a loss in any matter, whether to do or to forbear, why should we hesitate to invoke Him who teaches man wisdom, to cry, in view of the question practically to be resolved,

> "Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
> And lighten with celestial fire."

We need not, then, hesitate to teach our candidates that they may expect to receive the Holy Ghost as their Counsellor, their Guide, their Oracle; not superseding, indeed, the duty of study and deliberation, but guiding to right conclusions those who labor in dependence upon His grace.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST FOR DEFENCE.

We have said that the Holy Ghost is given us in Confirmation to strengthen and to enlighten. The service reminds us also,—

3. That the Holy Ghost is given for our *Defence.*

"Defend, O Lord, this Thy servant with Thy heavenly grace, that he may continue Thine forever." The child is God's child already. Left to himself, he may cease to be such. He needs the Defence of heavenly grace to guard him against those who would rob him of his birthright and spoil him of his sonship.

To this office of the Holy Ghost as our Defender our blessed Lord alluded in His last discourse. Very beautiful is the verse as we have it in our English Bible: "I will not leave you comfortless." But we cannot realize the preciousness of that assurance until we remember that the Greek word is "orphans."

We all have our share in this promise. We are not left orphans in this wide world. Our Lord has purchased with His blood an abiding presence of the Holy Ghost. He is ever near at hand, our Champion and our Protector. Let us not forget that there are enemies without as well as within. We are in ourselves weak and ignorant, and so need strength and illumination. But more than this. We are surrounded by actual enemies, with whom we are not able to cope. The Holy Ghost covers our heads in the day of battle, and fights in us and for us, in every hour of trial.

The military figure pervades Holy Scripture, and the formulas of the Church as well. During times of war how often has the observation been made that if the devotions of the Prayer-Book had been originally compiled for army use, they could scarcely be more appropriate for men engaged in actual conflict. And we are in actual conflict. A battle is raging about us all the day. We cannot see our foes, or number them. We have but vague conceptions of their nature and of their warfare. But we do know that there is a vast army of fallen

spirits, under a leader of rare intelligence, who seek to compass our ruin.

When one seriously realizes this, when he remembers that the devil prevailed over the father of our race, and dared to try his powers upon the spotless Son of Mary, well may he dread the life-long struggle with him. And as we add to this, the thought of the many-sidedness of his assault, of his intimate acquaintance with the vulnerable points in our fallen nature, of the many instances in which he has prevailed over men who seemed to be far better than we, are we not tempted to fold our hands in despair, and to yield without a struggle ?

Now, we have been taking much pains to make our candidates realize how formidable are these enemies of the soul. Their own limited experience has taught them that an enemy is ever on the watch to snatch away the good thought, and to inject the evil into the soul ; to inflame the sinful desire, and to quench the light of devotion ; to defeat the holy purpose, and reconcile us to sins which once we abhorred. How suitable, then, is it to remind them of Defence as well as danger. How ex-

cellent the prayer for the recruit going forth to battle, "Defend, O Lord, this Thy servant!"

Very grand things, then, does it become us to believe concerning that Holy One who watches around the camp of Israel, and whose hand of grace is extended over the head of each member of the Church. He does defend; he will defend. Confirmation is a pledge and assurance that He will march before us and behind us—cloud by day, and fire by night—and lead us in safety through the enemy's country.

The evil in this world is so great, that we are sometimes tempted to think that it is irresistible. Canon Liddon well says: "We assume not merely a perverted but an unconquerable devil, when we despair of expelling, by God's grace, that which is evil in ourselves or in society." It is thus that he expounds the text in Isaiah, "I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil." Not that God is the author of evil, but that God is the cleanser of those hearts which by perversion of their loving hand turned good into evil. These wicked ones are mighty, but our

almighty ; they who fight us are but creatures, while He who defends us is the Creator Spirit. After all, it is the finite against the infinite ; the fallen angel against the God who made him. The strife, however formidable it may seem to us, is unequal. If we take the Holy Ghost for our Defender, we shall come off conquerors, and more than conquerors.

I have thus touched upon the chief gifts of the Holy Ghost pledged to us, and in greater or less measure conveyed to us in Confirmation. A thoughtful clergyman cannot lack material for abundant teaching in this connection. It is not one of the least advantages of this oft-recurring rite, that it almost compels us to unfold this Gospel of the Holy Ghost, so much slighted in the usual religious teaching of the nation.

While others are vaunting the grandeur of humanity, and persuading men to evolve the good out of themselves, be it ours to point men disheartened and discomfited, to the consolations of Pentecost as supplementing and making available the great sacrifice of Calvary. Be it our high privilege to persuade them of the

good news, that our blessed Lord has sent *another* Comforter to abide with us ; a Defender as vigilant, as mighty, as loving, as patient, as the Eternal Son whom He has succeeded in the guardianship of the Church on earth.

Before leaving these words of Confirmation said by the Bishop, we should call attention to the spiritual growth that is specially invoked. We do not pray merely that the person "may continue Thine forever," but that he may "daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit, more and more." We pray for a daily growth, a growth exceeding each day that of the day before, with no bound or limit until we "come to Thine everlasting Kingdom."

For although in the nature of things we cannot demand high attainments of sanctity in the young and untried, yet if their faith be as a grain of mustard seed, it must be in them a principle of growth. Each little fibre of root will contribute to some leaf or blossom of obedience; and each such obedience will drink in the blessed smile of God, and send it down to strengthen the root that it may bring forth more fruit. Confirmation is the beginning

of a higher life, not the culmination of it. It is the shooting of the blade : and the ear, and the full corn in the ear, should follow in due order and in steadily increasing sequence. It is another talent given, and the Lord expects His own with usury.

We may not be able to recognize this daily growth in ourselves. The very advance in our self-knowledge, and in our conception of Christian life and duty, may make us think worse of ourselves as time goes on. But the surest growth of all is in self-distrust. At least we may know that we are not content with present attainments, but are striving each day to grow in docility and obedience, in self-denial and faithful service.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ADMISSION TO THE HOLY COMMUNION.

Among the privileges appertaining to Confirmation, a notable one is the admission to a place at the Holy Table, and a portion of the sacred feast. For after one has been confirmed, he has *a right* to the Lord's Supper, and none can refuse him the children's bread, unless for the cause of evident misbehavior.

Religious children sometimes yearn for this privilege before they are old enough to use it. They are grieved to stay in their places while father and mother kneel at the rail. They recognize the act of homage, and long to testify by this outward demonstration their gratitude and fealty to the God of mercy. They see that it is, to devout people, a spiritual refreshment, and desire to share in it. Such desires are to be encouraged. We can scarcely begin too soon to speak to our children of the

sacred feast. How much better is it that they should look forward to it as a privilege, the very greatest man can have on earth, and even press against the barriers which, for a time, debar them from it, than to confront it, later in life, as an inevitable duty, attended with great hazard unless the work of sanctification has been completed.

Domestic life here furnishes again an illustration. In an affectionate family it is matter of congratulation when the little one begins to emerge from babyhood, and has a seat at the father's board. How much greater should be our joy when Christ's little ones need no longer be confined to the sincere milk of the Word! And how anxious should we be to see them at the Holy Table, just as soon as they are able to "discern the Lord's Body," and are capable of receiving, with profit, the stronger nourishment therein provided for Christian souls!

So, then, as we approach the close of our Confirmation instructions, we may well seek to excite the spiritual appetite of our children, and so to present to them the excellency of the

Lord's Supper, that they shall hunger and thirst for its sweet refreshment.

Only think of it, how blessed a thing is it, yea, and how true and just is the conception, for a child to learn first of the Eucharist as a joy and a privilege, and to come to it presently, not with the danger and peril of unworthy receiving uppermost in the thought, but rather with unspeakable gratitude for the condescension that admits an untried child into so holy a brotherhood, and to a feast so satisfying.

Yes, it is the marriage supper of the Lamb, in figure and antepast. It is ours to lead them to the portal; to stand awhile with them explaining the glory of the feast, and the sweetness of its song; to tell them of its abundance, so that there is bread enough and to spare; to animate their desire, even while we gently restrain them, so that they may not fail to come pure and clean, in the marriage garment required by God in Holy Scripture.

We need be at little loss for suggestion, when we thus begin to set forth the blessedness of admission to the Holy Eucharist. The

theme has warmed the heart and opened the lips, and moved the pen of the wisest and devoutest of our race,—St. Augustine and Hooker, Bishop Andrewes and John Keble, nay, every worthy of ancient or modern times, whose volumes are most prized among us, has, in his own way, said or sung lofty words concerning this privilege. And if we have no books, let any one who has been a communicant from early youth revive his own heart's story; let him remember how he has found in the Eucharist strength in evil days, and succor in temptation; how in times of great trouble it has come to him with a peace which no words can utter, and how yet again, in some great deliverance, it has opened just the channel which the heart craved for the utterance of its gratitude, and he can scarcely fail to persuade others, that in this world as well as that beyond the veil, applies that Beatitude, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

1. *Children are grateful.*—For this reason we may well encourage them to think of the Holy Sacrament as a Eucharist, as the very

loftiest act of worship, as the uttermost consecration of one's self to his Saviour.

We read to them, it may be supposed, some of the affecting incidents of the Passion, encouraging each one the while to think, this is the story of One "who loved me and gave Himself for me," of One who died, not for my sins only, "but for the sins of the whole world."

And while the young hearts are aglow with such recollections, one reminds them how great was the privilege of the few who

"Honored Him 'mid shame and scorn;"

of Joseph, who went in boldly and craved the body; of Nicodemus, who spared no cost, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes—about an hundred pounds' weight; of holy women, who wept over those cruel wounds, and sought with loving reverence to compose the limbs distorted with agony. Oh, children, one may say, had you been there, would you not have deemed it the highest privilege to render some act of homage to Him who was despised and rejected of men, the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief?

True it is, that our Lord dieth no more. That once mangled body now lives glorified in heaven. The Son of Man is no more sorrowful,—does not now need any to watch with Him and lend Him the support of sympathy. But the guilt of that blood rests upon the world, and comparatively few have disavowed the outrage; or if they have done so in form, retain a loving memory of Him. Many are still hostile, and say, We will not have this Man to reign over us; some, who partly accept His sayings, do still charge Him with blasphemy, because He said, "I am the Son of God."

If, then, one reads this story with a swelling heart and a glow of indignation, can he, in the nature of things, be content to keep his convictions to himself? Shall he not long for some fitting opportunity, not inconsistent with the humility and unobtrusiveness which befit a child, to disavow all sympathy with those who despised, with those who still despise, the Man of Nazareth, and to tell it out that he worships Him in his inmost soul, and loves Him with all his heart?

Our Blessed Lord deprecated the unmindfulness of His people. Is there not a shade of wistfulness in His words, "Do this in remembrance of Me?" What pity and what shame for the world to forget the sublimest sacrifice of its truest Friend—the expiation to the uttermost of all its sins!

Absolute forgetfulness is impossible, so long as the Eucharist is celebrated. We show forth the Lord's death until He come; and however the world may forget, in thousands of churches, day by day, men are put in remembrance of the Sacrifice on Calvary.

I think a child can readily appreciate the privilege of bearing a part, however humble, in a service like this.

Sublime as is the service, in its aspect toward men, a representation in drama, so to speak, impressive even to one who cannot hear the spoken words, our estimate of it is enhanced when we conceive of it as a service rendered to God.

How must it kindle the enthusiasm of a child to see that service, not in its isolation, but in its intimate connection with things unseen.

The sacrifice once completed is rehearsed and presented anew in earth and in heaven.

The Great High Priest has carried with Him into the skies the blood of atonement, and ever pleads it with the Father; and we are telling in word and act the same story here, and lifting up holy hands to God, reminding Him of the expiation made. It is no extravagance of faith to bethink ourselves that it is all one service—the people praying without and the High Priest in the most Holy Place united in urging the one only plea which can stay the hand of justice; while there rolls beneath the cry for mercy, the grand accompaniment, ceaseless as the murmur of the sea, swelled by the voices of the living and the dead, "Blessing and honor, and glory and power!"

Oh, little child! we may say, children in the olden days were once permitted to sing hosannas in the temple, and you may be disposed to envy them. But how much higher is your privilege in these latter days—to bear witness before men to the fact that Christ hath died, and to have your own share in the ceaseless iteration of the plea which the Father loves

well to hear, as well as in the tribute of homage and praise which all saintly intelligences unite to offer.

2. *Children are dependent.*—They will seldom fail to appreciate anything which tells them of *help.*

Our sacred calling opens to us no more interesting page than that which reveals the spiritual conflict of children. I am reminded, just now, of one of the purest little boys I ever knew, who, upon the eve of Confirmation, told me, with all gravity, that he believed he had been one of the greatest sinners that ever lived; and of a little girl, than whom none seemed to me a more certain illustration of the baptismal gift never despised or frustrated, who sought me, under like circumstances, to open the grief of hardness of heart and dullness of affection, and to ask a remedy for her complaint. We may be sure no vicissitudes of religious experience are strange to them. Their temptation is small; but then the child is small. They are as severely exercised, perchance, in some such small matter as giving up play for a hard lesson, as we older ones in resisting more fatal temptations to self-indulgence.

Moreover, a child is not satisfied with abstractions; he appreciates signs and tokens. He desires the caress as well as the word of kindness. He likes to sit close beside the mother, and to slip his hand into hers. And if we agree to do somewhat for him, he is anxious to know the when and the how.

We may, then, explain to the children that they should desire to come to the Holy Communion, not because they are good, but because it is the special means of making good those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Tell them *there is help here.*

Not only will the acts of worship remind them of their Christian profession, not only will the re-affirmation of their good resolutions add strength to them; this is part of the benefit. But we may and we must explain further that there are mysterious benefits which we seek in faith, and of which no natural explanation can be given. Christ comes to feed us, and He feeds us with Himself. He feeds us often and over again. The journey is too great for us; He knows it well. The table is spread in the wilderness, that we may eat and faint not.

Yes, He is Helper as well as Saviour. He would not die to procure our pardon, and then leave us without the help necessary to make the pardon a blessing to us. And when the child takes into his hand the Holy Bread, he should believe that the Saviour is thus assuring him of His loving care; persuading him that He is near at hand, and does not overlook him in the crowd; promising, and more than promising, conferring and exhibiting the help his soul needs.

We need not fear to attribute such virtue to the Sacrament that those who use it are helped and strengthened, as they would not be if through lack of instruction, or through erroneous teaching, they used it not.

We cannot measure this help by rule any more than we can set up a "Prayer-gauge." It sometimes *seems* that we have called on God in vain, and so it *seems*, that after Holy Communion, we are as weak as before; yet both have the promise of help; and experience proves, while it does not show a sensible result from one prayer or one communion, that the child who devoutly prays, is

blessed, and he who devoutly communes, is helped.

In what has thus been written, I am far from endeavoring to set out with any completeness the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. I have only suggested some views concerning it which may be proper to be suggested to young children.

And is there not cause for such writing? Are we not too reserved, even to discouragement, on this topic? God forbid that we should encourage to the communion untaught children, thoughtless children, undevout children. Only we insist, that we owe it to children, however faulty and heedless they may seem to be, to hold up admission to the Lord's Table as a privilege greatly to be desired, as a help to conquer their faults.

Others are not as reserved as we. A hundred voices conspire to remind them of pleasures and advantages which may presently be accessible to them. Every boy and girl is fondling in his heart some vision of what is to come when he is older; is anticipating something which has so fired his imagination, that to come

short of it would be no small element of grief in an early death.

Can we not, if our own hearts are right, hold up an object of desire before which other childish aspirations shall be dwarfed? Many of us have seen the inexpressible comfort found by bereaved parents in the fact that a son or daughter, lying in early youth on his death-bed, of his own accord asked for the Communion, and received it to his profit and his comfort. The recollection of some tiny hand wasted with sickness reached forth to receive the Holy Bread, and of the fair young face so full of peace, is a dear thing to keep by us.

But, methinks, the living need the help more than do the dying. They who are going forth to the battle of life (oh, how our hearts melt with pity when we think that soon our trials must be theirs) need to be fortified even more than they who are hastening to the place where the wicked cease from troubling.

The blessedness of the Holy Communion! Let us urge this upon the children.

"Blessed is the man"—and doubly blessed the child—"that hath set his hope in the Lord,

and turned not unto the proud, and to such as go about with lies."

And, O God! "blessed is the man," and not less the child, "whom Thou choosest and receivest unto Thee; He shall dwell in Thy courts, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy house, even of Thy Holy Temple."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONFIRMED WHO DO NOT COMMUNICATE.

GREAT mischief has come from the admission to Confirmation of persons who have halted there, and never availed themselves of their liberty to come to the Holy Communion. The Church, thanks be to God for the spirituality that now pervades her, has greatly overcome this negligence. But, every now and then, we find a parish where it still exists, to the scandal of the Church and to the sorrow of the devout. Where such neglect *commonly* prevails, it implies grave error in the clergyman. The fault is distinctly his, and he deserves severest censure.

Perhaps he has been idle and careless. He has neglected that painstaking education of his people which is the only safe method of guiding souls. He has been a lounger or a gossip most of his time, getting up vehement, hortatory sermons for the Sunday with little spiritual

aliment in them. His genius is too lofty for steady work, his soul too great for catechism.

But the Bishop is coming, and something must be done. And now his zeal comes on as a fever-fit. He compasses sea and land to make one proselyte. All are fish that come in the way of his net. He proposes Confirmation to one and another, and so soon as an assent is won, and the name exactly ascertained and noted in his memorandum, passes on to another. Thus a class is gathered of people, some of them barely solemnized for the occasion. When the call is made, they start up like Roderick Dhu's men, to every one's astonishment. And presently they vanish in the heather, and are no longer to be recognized.

Or it may be that the clergyman is a man of forms and externals, without a just appreciation of the importance of the inner life of faith. There was once a school among us, now we hope almost obsolete, known as the "High and Dry." These men exalted the excellence of sacraments while they made little mention of the qualifications necessary to receive them aright. Under their influence we have known

persons to be confirmed whose account of the matter was just this: they had been persuaded that it was a "step in the right direction," or it was "putting one's self under better influences," and the like. They came, hoping that somehow or other they would be benefitted, but with no previous searching of heart, no special purposes of amendment. Nay, we have even known intemperate men seeking to be confirmed, without making any resolute stand against their sin, with no more than a vague expectation that they would feel more inclined to the work of reformation.

And yet, again, there have been clergymen, lacking neither in industry nor in right notions about holy things, who, through natural reserve, or the fear of man, or the want of a just sense of official responsibility, shrink from any conversation which goes beyond generalities. Give them the pulpit and a congregation, and they are "much bold in Christ Jesus to enjoin that which is convenient." But a private interview frightens them. They fancy that by the fidelity of their public teachings they have discharged their consciences, and that each can-

didate must come forward on his own responsibility.

If, then, the parish priests be lazy, or unspiritual, or timid (and we suppose in every age and in every Church, some such will be found), we can expect nothing better than that their candidates will be deficient in earnestness. Better it is, no doubt, that they should stop short, than come without serious repentance to the blessed Sacrament. A great injury is done to the individual, as well as to the Church community, when people are thus confirmed who have no thought of undertaking at once the religious life to which the habitual reception of the Holy Communion would seem to commit them. Is it too much to say that their part in Confirmation is a lie, aye, and a lie to the Holy Ghost?

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was that they professed to give all while they knowingly kept back a part. What else is it but the like offence, deliberately and by a formal public act to acknowledge one's self bound to do certain well-defined things in the way of Christian duty, and then, without any earnest effort to

do them, to resume the old careless way of living?

And that lazy, or unspiritual, or timid priest—is he not a partaker of the sin? Some of the most impracticable and unapproachable people we ever have to deal with are those who have been confirmed in this careless way. A reference to their Confirmation seems only to annoy them, and religious dullness gets the mastery over them.

I have said that where this evil is largely prevalent the fault must be in the clergyman. But it would be very unjust to the sacred order to fault them in all cases. It may be doubted whether there are not confirmed people who do not communicate in the best conducted parishes, where the clergyman has done everything that man can do to enlighten them and to encourage them.

We encounter, occasionally, among people who have been misdirected in early life, a morbid dread of the Holy Communion, which at last becomes utterly unreasonable. And that, too, in persons who are exemplary in character and life. So dangerous is it, in their estima-

tion, to go, that they prefer the acknowledged risk of staying away. They are not content to approach with that worthiness required in the Prayer-Book, but set up an impossible standard of victory won over every fault. It is bad enough, they think, to yield to a sinful inclination; but to go to the Communion presently, with an earnest desire and purpose to amend, but without deliverance from the inclination itself, aggravates their sin into blasphemy. In many parishes there are such morbid consciences. They are to be treated with an exceptional kindness. We can best deal with them by unlimited forbearance and patience. Harshness only aggravates the evil.

Let not the clergyman reproach himself that he cannot bring every one to the Communion. He should not give up any such soul-sick man, nor despair of ultimate success; but he must be patient about it. He must speak comfortably to him. He must endeavor to enlist him in active Christian duty; there is nothing like steady, honest work for Christ and His Church, to cure a man of religious fancies.

There is another class of non-communicants

who cause the clergyman great concern. It is so hard to describe them in the way of definition, that I prefer to illustrate. Here is a man of high character and standing, honest and upright; too intelligent and right-minded to do anything unadvisedly. He presents himself for Confirmation; but evidently with a struggle, for he shrinks from observation, and the clergyman can hardly press him with much questioning. He becomes a leading man in the parish—attentive, liberal and active in Church work; but he does not communicate. He is very kind and gentle in his family, but reserved about his secret thoughts. His wife herself cannot venture to obtrude into some corners of his heart.

Violent treatment would do such a one harm. What the world calls *tact* must be used; and tact, when Christianized, means the harmless wisdom enjoined upon us by our Lord. It is to do nothing seemingly, and yet to be on the watch, and when the right time comes and some joint in this harness of reserve is disclosed, to launch a keen, strong dart.

Bishop Cobbs used to tell of such an instance: An old gentleman, a prominent states-

man, the very model of integrity, but sensitive and reserved whenever a nerve was touched. The Bishop won his regard and confidence, and awaited his opportunity. It came to pass that they took a long horseback ride together, and the conversation turned on the power of parental influence and good example. And then the Bishop gave him the long-delayed home thrust. "Yes," said he, "and some of these days I expect your boys will rise up and say, 'My father was as good a man as ever lived; he never went to the Communion, and I can do without it.' Do you think it right and safe, even if the Holy Communion does not seem indispensable to yourself, to encourage your children by your example to risk the world's temptations, without using all the helps God has provided?" The gentleman was impressed by the appeal; he yielded with scarce a struggle, and for the rest of his life was a devout communicant.

How commonplace an anecdote! one may say. Yes; but it is just these obvious common-sense matters we are apt to overlook. Let us realize that in these troublesome cases it is not worth while to worry and complain

that people are stupid or intractable; nor will it suffice to preach against the error. By all means let us teach the man what he seems to need; but, more than this, let us make the individual a study, and rest not until we find out the right time, and the right word to speak effectively.

I am very far from agreeing with those who, in order to obviate these evils, would make an immediate approach to the Holy Table an indispensable qualification for Confirmation.

We cannot impose an inexorable rule; but we shall generally succeed in bringing our candidates to the Holy Communion, if we are careful to set out two things very earnestly and very often in our preliminary teaching—viz., the necessity of a true self-surrender and consecration to God, and then the sweetness and helpfulness of the Holy Eucharist, to such as hunger and thirst after righteousness.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CONFIRMATION OFFICE ENRICHED.

SHOULD the action of the General Convention of 1883 be hereafter ratified, a few changes will be made in the office on which we have commented. They are, without exception, designed to emphasize truths already therein set forth. With some account of these changes, and with a few practical hints, this volume may be concluded.

1. *The Preface.*

We may use the Preface, as we now have it. It was originally a rubric, and is too valuable to be displaced from the front of the office. A good rubric is not of necessity an appropriate Preface.

So, then, the Bishop or some minister appointed by him, may say instead of it, or in addition to it:

"Hear the words of the Evangelist Saint

Luke in the eighth chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles.*"

This is the account of the visit of St. Peter and St. John to Samaria, in order to lay hands upon those baptized under the ministry of Philip the Deacon. It is analogous to the Scripture Lesson in the opening of the Baptismal Office, and gives in advance the authority for the language of the subsequent collect, "after the example of thy Holy Apostles."

2. *The Candidates presented, and the Minister challenged.*

We have here a new feature, after the analogy of the Ordinal.

Reverend Father in God, I present unto you these children (or *these persons*) to receive the Laying on of Hands.

The Bishop.

Take heed that the children (or *persons*) whom ye present unto us, be sufficiently instructed in the principles of Christ's religion, and that they be minded to fear God and to keep His commandments.

The Minister shall answer,

I have examined them and think them so to be.

[*Or, if certain of them shall have been examined by another than himself, he shall say*, I have examined them or inquired concerning them, and think them so to be.]

We do not here, for the first time, make the Minister responsible for the instruction and preparation of candidates. The rubrics at the end of the Catechism are very emphatic. The Minister is there required personally to instruct children, to satisfy himself of their readiness, and to deliver to the Bishop a written list, with his name subscribed, of those whom "*he shall think fit* to be presented to the Bishop to be confirmed."

It is an additional safeguard, to remind pastor and people, at the time of Confirmation, of the gravity of the occasion, and of the care to be taken lest persons unfit by reason of ignorance or thoughtlessness, should thus obtain access to the Holy Communion.

3. *Examination of Candidates.*

The Examination, heretofore compressed into one question, with the brief answer, "I do," is now amplified thus:

Then shall the Bishop demand of those who are to be Confirmed, these questions following; but if there be among the Candidates any who in riper years have answered for themselves in Holy Baptism, of such shall only the last one of the said questions be required.

The Bishop.

Dost thou renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh, so that thou will not follow nor be led by them?

Answer. I renounce them.

The Bishop.

Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth?

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord? And that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary: that he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried: that he descended into hell, and also rose again the third day: that he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of

God the Father Almighty: and from thence shall come to judge the quick and the dead?

And dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost: the holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints: the Forgiveness of sins: the Resurrection of the body: and the Life everlasting?

Answer. I believe.

The Bishop.

Wilt thou obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?

Answer. I will, by God's help.

The Bishop.

Do ye here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that ye made, or that was made in your name, at your Baptism; ratifying and confirming the same; and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe and to do all those things which ye then undertook, or your Sponsors then undertook for you?

Answer. I do.

Heretofore, the Candidate had need, for the

right understanding of the vow, to refer to the Baptismal Office, where that which a Christian is bound "to believe and to do," is set forth at large.

The single question of the office now in use is too terse and comprehensive, to be fully apprehended by children or unlettered people. Hence the need of some amplification in order to guard against a confused and inadequate idea of the engagement now renewed. By introducing into the Office the Creed in full, a manifest deficiency is supplied, while the recasting of it, in interrogative form, serves to quicken the attention.

Let it not be objected that the utterance of these vows anew in anywise detracts from their original force and obligation. It is eminently suitable to make identical promises under various circumstances. Thus, in ordaining Deacons and Priests, we propound, in each office, the question, "Will you be diligent to frame and fashion your own selves, and your families . . ." in almost the same words. So, also, when a Bishop is consecrated, two of the questions are identical, and one almost identi-

cal, with those propounded at his ordination to the Priesthood.

"Dost THOU renounce?" "Dost THOU believe?" "Wilt THOU obediently keep God's holy will?" these questions are in the singular number, as if to impress each Candidate with the sense of personal obligation, taking him in spirit, as it were, out of the crowd, and dealing with him for himself and by himself alone.

And the last question, "Do YE here . . . " is comprehensive, and brings in the fellowship of the confirmed.

We may well expect, that this ampler and more distinct interrogation, will prove to be for the edifying of the confirmed and of those who witness the confirmation.

4. "*Then may be sung a Hymn.*"

In revising this office, some greatly desired to bring in the thought of the Priesthood of Christ's People, the suggestion that while Baptism admits us to privilege, the Laying on of Hands sets us apart specifically for God's service. Hence, we were glad to secure the Presenting of the Candidate, the Challenge and the Reply, after the model of the Ordinal.

Now, in Ordering a Priest, the recital of the VENI, CREATOR SPIRITUS is an impressive feature.

After the examination, after the solemn stillness kept for silent prayer, and before the act of Ordination, the Bishop and others gathered around the kneeling candidate, invoke the Holy Ghost.

We asked the privilege, the examination being concluded, and the preparatory prayer having been said, of making special invocation of the Comforter upon those to be confirmed.

Without adopting any one formula in this place, the Committee inserted this rubric: "Then may be sung a Hymn," in order to permit such invocation. The candidates, required presently to be in order kneeling before the Bishop, may assume that position (although the congregation stands) when the Bishop bids to prayer.

And then by judicious selection from the authorized Hymnal, we may solemnly invoke the Holy Ghost.

The hymns for Whitsuntide, 125 to 137, and

those for Confirmation, 234 to 248, give us variety of selection.

Among the hymns of invocation, we may note—

Hymn 130 :

> Lord God, the Holy Ghost,
> In this accepted hour.

Hymn 131 :

> Come, Gracious Spirit, heavenly Dove,
> With light and comfort from above.

Hymn 135 :

> Come, Holy Spirit, Come,
> Let thy bright beams arise.

Hymn 240 :

> Draw, Holy Ghost, thy seven-fold veil
> Between us and the fires of youth.

Hymn 242 :

> Arm these thy soldiers, mighty Lord,
> With shield of faith and Spirit's sword.

I have mentioned the several translations in the Hymnal of the "*Veni, Creator Spiritus.*" Some of us dislike, on liturgical grounds, to use elsewhere, with too much freedom, what has come

to be distinctive of a special office. A beautiful translation, unlike those appropriated to the Ordinal, is

Hymn 129:

> Creator Spirit, by whose aid
> The world's foundations first were laid.

5. *The Minister shall not omit to move the persons confirmed, to come, without delay, to the Lord's Supper.*

If a candidate has it not in his mind and heart to become a communicant, he is not ready for Confirmation.

The Church does not say that he must come in a week or a month. There are those of scrupulous conscience, with whom compulsion would be painful.

Moreover, in the case of young children especially, it is found profitable to appoint a day for the First Communion, and to prepare them especially therefor. One sees in the streets on the continent of Europe, at certain festivals, girls in quasi-bridal costume, and boys with favors of white ribbon, who have made

their First Communion in the morning, and are fêted during the afternoon and evening. The fine clothes and the amusement can scarce fail to be distracting. But the underlying thought of making the day of a child's First Communion a day of congratulation and of family reunion, is very beautiful.

This rubric then emphasizes the duty of the minister to urge that there shall be no unnecessary delay in approaching the Holy Table.

6. *This Office may be used alone, or as the Bishop, in his discretion, may appoint.*

No doubt, the Bishop has this discretion already. The English Bishops, as a rule, administer Confirmation with a brief service.

The new rubric is intended rather to emphasize the principle that the Episcopal Visitation is an exceptional service, having Confirmation specially in view. The abbreviation of the services on such an occasion is not to be considered an example or precedent which the clergy may follow on ordinary occasions of public worship.

The Bishop has been administering Confirmation every day or twice a day for many days

together. He reaches a country church. The people would be disappointed if he did not preach a sermon. He desires the privilege, if it be a morning service, of administering the Holy Communion to the flock. Often the musicians have prepared elaborate anthems, adding to the length of the service. Perchance the Rector entreats the Bishop, as they enter the chancel, to "say a word" about Diocesan Missions, Guild work, or parochial affairs. Thus, if the usual routine is followed, with the additions incident to Visitation and Confirmation, the service becomes wearisome and is marred in its specific character.

It should be well understood that if the Bishop thinks best on a Sunday morning to begin with the Communion Office, it by no means follows that the Morning Prayer is to be omitted where there is no such reason.

It may be that the proposed "Office of the Beatitudes" will be found a most suitable introduction to an afternoon or evening Confirmation.

We have insisted, in a previous chapter, on the excellence of Benediction in general and on its

significance in this connection. When our young children are on the way to be confirmed it is well to intensify and repeat the blessings ; it is well for their young lips to murmur the response of the Virgin Mary to her personal benediction, "Be it unto thy servants according to thy word," and the prayer of Mary's great ancestor, "Let thy loving mercy come also unto us, O Lord ! even thy salvation, according to thy word."

"Comfort ye my people," is no small part of the Church's high commission. The English Church, in her discretion, has set forth a Commination Service. The American Church, exercising like discretion, is now proposing, as her liturgical contribution, an office, the burden of which shall be, "The Lord will give his people the blessing of peace."

7. *Postures to be Observed.*

The candidates are described as "placed and standing in order," and are required to be "kneeling before the Bishop" when he is ready to impose hands. The custom has been to stand through the prayer "Almighty and everlasting God ;" but it seems more suitable that

the candidates should be on their knees when this prayer is said in their behalf.

For this is not their prayer. It is said by others, interceding for them. The instinct of humility would seem to send one to his knees when a congregation makes personal supplication for him.

Candidates should be instructed to kneel with the head erect.

It is not seemly to bury the face in the hands, to crouch upon the rail, and to offer the back of the head to the hands of the ministrant.

Have compassion on the Bishop. If the candidates kneel erect, he passes from one to another with no effort save to extend his hands. But if otherwise, if the Bishop must bend and stoop to reach the level of a head prostrate toward the rail, the fatigue in a large Confirmation is very great. Let one who is not very strong try the experiment, even without uttering a formula at the same time, of changing a hundred times in a few minutes, from an erect to a stooping position and back again, and he will understand why Bishops should desire to be spared this superfluous exertion.

I had always interpreted the rubric, after the imposition of hands, "*All kneeling down*," as including the Bishop.

But if the Bishop kneels in the prayers, his rising to pronounce the benediction is often taken as a signal to do the like by others. Hence has come a certain eagerness of the Bishop to assume the attitude of benediction before the confirmed can rise to their feet.

I have learned from my Episcopal colleagues that there is no occasion to alter this rubric, because it does not apply to the ministrant. "All kneeling down, the Bishop shall add:" and after the prayers, with no note of change of posture, "Then the Bishop shall bless them." Comparing these two rubrics, we see that the Bishop is, in the matter of posture, left free to exercise his own discretion.

Once more, it is by no means superfluous for the ministers to instruct their candidates how to receive the Holy Communion. We witness at the reception of the first communion much awkwardness. Some are at a loss how to receive the sacred bread; some hesitate to touch the chalice. A few simple directions

about removing the glove, extending the open palm, accepting the cup delivered into the hand, kneeling for private devotion after returning to one's place, will conduce to decorum and relieve the candidate from embarrassment.

The writer holds that the prayers of the faithful enter as an important element in the celebration of this office. Their sympathy and their assent are implied.

Therefore, when the Bishop rises with the versicle, "Our help is in the name of the Lord," the people should also rise and answer him, and as each candidate is confirmed, the *Amen* (surely it should be printed in italics), whether sung or said, should ring out heartily from all the people.

Publishers Advertisement.

Devotional Reading.

The Via Crucis Series of Devotional Manuals

1. The Christian Year—Keble.
2. The Imitation of Christ—A'Kempis.
3. Bogatzky's Golden Treasury.
4. Eucharistica.
5. Bishop Patrick's Heart's Ease.
6. Bishop Wilson's Lord's Supper.
7. Divine Breathings. 15th Edition.
8. Andrewes' Private Devotions.
9. The Poems of George Herbert.
10. A'Kempis' Soliloquy of the Soul.
11. St. Augustine's Confessions.
12. Scupoli's Spiritual Combat.

Beautifully printed from new plates. Red line. Cloth limp. Elegant. Orange Edge. Price each, 75 cents.

"In every respect they are admirable."—*Church Review.*

JAMES POTT & CO., Church Publishers.

The Life of Fellowship. By Rev. A. M. JAMES. Price, 75 cents.

True Consecration. Same author. Price, 75 cents.

"Complete manuals or illustrations of the Christian life in all its stages."

Meditations on the Creed. By ARTHUR C. A. HALL, M.A., of the Society of St. John the Evangelist. 18mo, 182 pages, vellum cloth, red edge. Second thousand. Net, 50 cents.

Meditations on the Lord's Prayer. By same author. Price, 50 cents.

"Each page is suggestive."—*Am. Ch. Review.*

"Clear and manly. . . . It ought to be read and studied by every Christian."—*Churchman.*

The Breaking of the Bread. An Explanation of the Holy Communion, with Notes on the Communion Service. By the Rev. EDWARD L. CUTTS, B.A., Hon. D.D. of the University of the South. Price, 60 cents.

"It puts in a clear light both the sacrificial and festal character of the Blessed Sacrament."—*Am. Literary Churchman.*

JAMES POTT & CO., Church Publishers.

How to Behave in the Parish. By the Rev. R. W. LOWRIE. 98 pages, paper. Fourth thousand. Reduced, 10 cents.

The Parish—What it is. The Rector—Who and what he is. Parishioners—this sort and that. The Sunday-School. The Choir. Church Music. Church History, etc.

Should be in the hands of every communicant of the Church.

Some Quiet Lenten Thoughts. Meditations for the Sixty Days of Lent. Preface by CANON KING. This excellent book is well suited for those who would keep this holy season amid the duties of a busy life. Cloth limp, 50 cents.

From Year to Year. Being Poems for the Church's Year. By Rev. EDW. BICKERSTETH. Author of "Yesterday, To-day, and Forever" Price, $1.25.

For Days and Years. A Daily Reading Text and Hymn for every day of the Christian Year. Selected by Mrs. SIDNEY SEAR. New edition. Cloth, 60 cents. Also in superb bindings.

JAMES POTT & CO., Church Publishers.

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500

All items are subject to recall.

GTU LIBRARY
3 2400 00571 0045